

Notre Dame Refugee Centre, Leicester Square

Good Morning. My name is Virginie. I work as a volunteer at Notre Dame Refugee Centre in Leicester Square. The centre is open on Mondays and Thursdays from 11am to 4pm for refugee people and asylum seekers. We are in the centre of this city where people will wait until the opening hours. Here are the second hand clothes that have been given to the church by the community. We have children's clothes and women's and men's clothes. These clothes will help people who do not have enough so they can try to find what is more suitable for them.

You can see we have just received donations of food. We will make up a bag and store them in the cupboard and give them to the refugee people on a Monday morning. We'll go up to the café where people will arrive to register and we ask them what they need. This is the café where people will sit and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, a breakfast and then lunch.

I am Jean and I am a volunteer and I come here every Monday and Thursday. I come originally from Mauritius and I was very much involved with the Catholic action movement there so when I came over here that's when I got involved also with Pax Christi. I have always been attracted by movements which make an option for the poor and that is very much my belief as a Christian. As a follower of Christ that is where I should be – by the side of the marginalised, the poor, the hungry and the refugees and so on.

On the second floor we have the offices where volunteer advice workers work. We will meet Daniel who is a volunteer advice worker.

The basic problems have to do with people's living conditions and that's very much related to their immigration status. We see a lot of people who are homeless or who are not receiving any kind of money and are unable to work and are supposed to be deported. Basically they are entirely destitute and we try to help them inasmuch as that can be done.

The Church does everything to help but they don't want it to be felt that it is a Church thing; they want the people to be helped and that is their duty. They try to create an open space for anyone who wants advice and they can come here without any labels attached to it. We feel that we are going there and we are helping people then we discover that it is they who are helping us to fulfil really our call to be Christians. It is one of the basic things that we should be doing. So I come here and I get my inspiration from the altar and then I turn around and I go out into the world.