

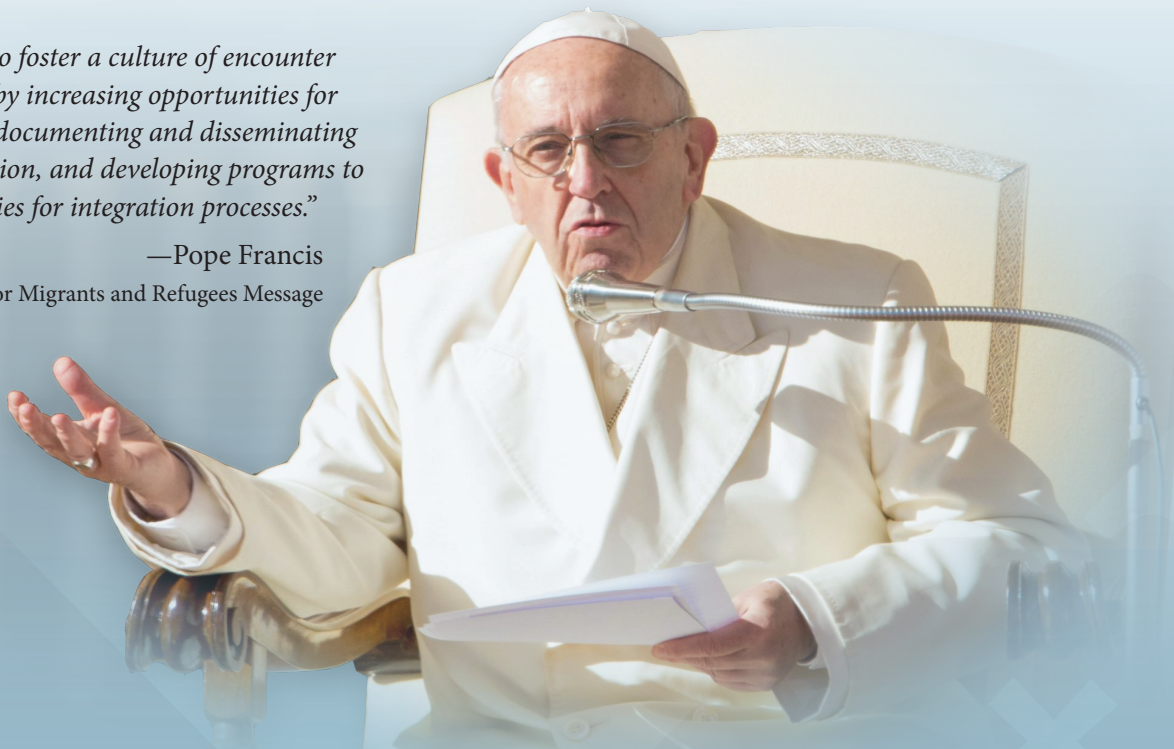
# WELCOMING AND INTEGRATING MIGRANTS

## A TASK FOR ALL OF US

*"I reiterate the need to foster a culture of encounter in every way possible – by increasing opportunities for intercultural exchange, documenting and disseminating best practices of integration, and developing programs to prepare local communities for integration processes."*

—Pope Francis

2018 World Day for Migrants and Refugees Message



### ***Purpose:***

*To provide a model for diocesan and parish leaders as to how they can help the process of welcome and integration of migrant communities. This model can be institutionalized on a large or small scale as needed.*

### ***Target Audience:***

*Diocesan and Parish Leadership*

## INTRODUCTION

*The integration of migrants into local communities is a critical process that will ensure their effective transition into a new culture and a new way of life. While immigrants must be willing to learn the and appreciate the culture and daily life of their new homeland, native-born citizens must be willing to assist in this process. As the Holy Father notes in the quotation above, it is important to develop and implement programs that will work toward this end. The Catholic Church is an institution that is ideally situated to do this. In the United States, the Church was a leading force in the integration of Catholics throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. It functioned as a bridge that helped countless Irish, German, Italian and other foreign nationals to become American. It continues to do so today. One of the ways in which the Catholic Church in the United States continues to do so is through the Parishes Organized to Welcome Immigrants and Refugees (POWIR) Program. We think it is possible to replicate this program in other dioceses around the world.*

Cover Credit: Vatican/Migrant and Refugee Section

## WHAT IS POWIR?

The Parishes Organized to Welcome Immigrants and Refugees (POWIR) Program is a model that your local diocese or parish can implement to better engage and welcome migrants into your community. POWIR increases volunteer involvement with immigration and refugee resettlement at the local parish level to develop long-term, sustainable programs. These programs connect your parish with other parishes

nationwide to assist and empower vulnerable populations. Support can come in the form of transportation, health services, legal assistance, employment opportunities, warm meals, and so much more. We are all called to welcome the stranger with open arms as if he or she were Christ Himself and encourage the right of every human being to pursue the call to holiness.

## WHO DOES POWIR SERVE?

First and foremost, the POWIR Program faithfully serves the immigrants, refugees, and other vulnerable migrant populations in our communities, a key virtue the Church upholds. Since 2010, the POWIR Program has empowered over 31,000 men, women, and child refugees. They come from Eastern and Southern Asia,

Africa, Latin America, and Europe. This is possible through the collective effort of over 16,000 volunteers across the country united to make a difference in immigrants and refugees' lives. It is the emphasis on voluntarism that makes this program effective. The more people that you can convince to volunteer their time



Source: Tyler Osburn



to help migrants, the more effective this kind of outreach will be to these communities. Volunteer engagement will assist in the integration of migrants into the community. This is important for everyone involved and will help to alleviate the antagonism that at times pervades the reception of migrants. Accompanying an individual through these acts can provide comfort, as well as spiritual and emotional support. It can build solidarity

between Catholic volunteers and migrants and their families as well as build bridges of understanding and mutual interest within communities. We recognize that the respective legal systems in your own country will require you to tailor a program like this to the specific realities of your situation, but hope that this model will provide some inspiration as you move forward in your effort to accompany migrants.

## HOW DOES POWIR WORK?

The POWIR Program works for parishes like yours, not only through increasing volunteer support, but also local cash and in-kind donations as well. An analysis of the POWIR program in the United States from 2010-2016 show that diocesan resettlement sites generated over \$4 for every \$1 of USCCB funding. Since 2010, the Church in the United States has generated \$8.1 million worth of donations and in-kind services. Given the long-term success of the program in the United States, we are confident that the program can be replicated under the auspices of other Catholic Conferences. In coordination with local parishes, there are opportunities to recruit volunteers, organize volunteers and resources, and train volunteers with appropriate knowledge and cultural sensitivity. A program like POWIR can help to equip your parishes with the necessary connections, knowledge, and training to be effective at migrant reception and protection.

*Source: AICS, Annalisa Vandelli*



## WHY IS POWIR IMPORTANT?

All throughout Scripture, we are called to care for our neighbor and look out for the poor and vulnerable. The POWIR Program is one way for your parish and community to live out this calling by providing much needed assistance to immigrants, refugees, and other vulnerable populations. You can raise awareness and provide valuable insight into the struggles of migrants settling into your country. In doing so, you and

your community can transform the narrative of migrants and refugees and serve something larger than any one parish ever could alone. Take a minute to think of the vulnerable populations in your community. Now think of all the people in your community that want to help them. Your parish is the instrument to connect these two groups. Your parish is ready to take part in this global calling.

## WHAT CAN YOUR DIOCESE AND PARISH DO?

All throughout Scripture, we are called to care for our neighbor and look out for the poor and vulnerable. If this is something you feel God is calling you and your community to embrace, you can get involved by:

- Taking a survey of your local parishioners' willingness to volunteer and support migrants
- Exploring funding mechanisms to support a POWIR Program in your community
- Connecting with the vulnerable populations you hope to serve

- Identifying local leaders and resources in your community who can serve the specific needs of migrants

The above admittedly provides only a broad outline of the way in which a program like POWIR can assist you in the reception and long-term integration of migrants in your local communities. We would love to talk you further about how you can launch a program of this sort. For more information on how this program can function as a model in your own diocese, please contact [MRSPOWIR@usccb.org](mailto:MRSPOWIR@usccb.org).



Source: Dale Gavlak