



Immigration Sunday MN



Share the
Journey #
#sharejourney



Feast of Our Lord's Epiphany
January 6, 2019

TEACHING & LITURGY PLANNING GUIDE

USCCB National Migration Week
January 6-12, 2019

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MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



Campaign Prayer

Have mercy on me, God most high.
In my fear and loneliness, be my
refuge.

Far from my homeland, I feel lost.
My heart is stirred by thoughts of
the family I left behind.
O God, hear their cries and come to
their help!

Calm the storms of anxiety and
doubt raging within me.
Go before me and guide my steps
among a people I do not know.

May their kindness and compassion
assure me that You are there to
welcome me.

Prayer developed by Cardinal Luis Tagle, president of
Caritas Internationalis, following his experiences
meeting migrants and refugees helped by Caritas.



A PRAYER FOR OUR COUNTRY

We know, Lord, that you yourself are a migrant. You
experienced the trials of the refugee, having fled as a
child with your parents, Joseph and Mary, to Egypt.
We know your special love for those with no other
possession but one another and you.

Move our hearts, Lord, and the hearts of our leaders to
love them as you do, to love them with your love, to be
your love for migrants at the doorway of our country.

Excerpted from *Sorrow and Mourning*
Flee Away by Bishop Mark J. Seitz,
Diocese of El Paso



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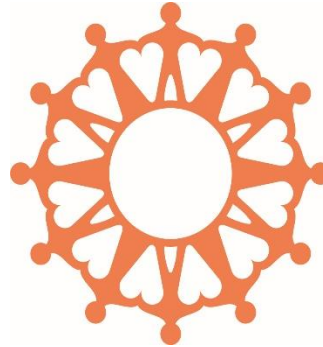


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BACKGROUND

Since 2009, the Catholic bishops of Minnesota have designated the Feast of Our Lord's Epiphany "Immigration Sunday MN" (this year, January 6, 2019). This commemoration coincides with the [*Share the Journey*](#) campaign, which is a co-effort by Caritas Internationalis, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services. *Share the Journey* is a two-year migration campaign that launched on September 27, 2017. Full details of the campaign can be found at <https://www.sharejourney.org/>.



**Share the
Journey** ✱
#sharejourney

Share the Journey has at its heart the vision of a united global human family. The focus is on our joint journey as people on the move in departure, transit, and host communities. Our public awareness campaign promotes opportunities and spaces for migrants and communities to come together and share stories and experiences, with the aim of strengthening the bonds between migrants and communities.

The campaign, led by Caritas Internationalis, encourages people to take action, raise awareness, and strengthen relationships between migrants, refugees, and communities. This campaign is in response to Pope Francis' call to promote a culture of encounter – to see people on the move with humanity, to open hearts and minds, to change perceptions.

This emphasis on encountering others in our midst is urgently needed. Our nation grows increasingly divided as differences between people, be they racial, religious, or socio-economic, are used to build walls that keep us apart. To the extent that we do interact with others, it is often done in the context of how we are different, failing to acknowledge the innumerable commonalities that should draw us together. Instead, we must speak from the most fundamental reality of our shared humanity: that we are all made in the image and likeness of God.

Encounter means overcoming indifference. We must begin to view life through the eyes of another and not simply close our eyes to what may be outside our comfort zone. As Pope Francis says, the culture of encounter is, "Not just to see but to look. Not just to hear but to listen. Not just to meet and pass by, but to stop. And don't just say 'what a shame, poor people,' but allow ourselves to be moved by pity."

In the Gospel of Matthew (25:35), Jesus tells his disciples, "I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." The migrant, who moves from one country to another, is truly a stranger in the midst. As Christians, we need to approach the phenomenon of migration with open hearts and open minds as we strive to create communities of encounter.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING ON IMMIGRATION & REFUGEES

The bishops' position on policy matters involving immigration and migrating persons is firmly rooted in the Social Doctrine of the Church and comprised of: the teachings of the Gospel; the Catechism; and papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents.

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

Both the Old and New Testaments tell compelling stories of refugees forced to flee their homelands because of oppression. Exodus tells the story of the Chosen People, Israel, who were victims of slavery in Egypt. They were utterly helpless by themselves, but with God's powerful intervention, they were able to escape and take refuge in the desert. For forty years, they lived as wanderers. Finally, God fulfilled his ancient promise and settled them on the land they could finally call home. The Israelites' experience was so painful and frightening that God ordered his people for all time to have special care for the stranger: "When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Lev 19:34).

One need not look further than the life and words of Jesus to understand that people on the move—migrants, immigrants, and refugees—are special in the eyes of God. The New Testament begins with Matthew's story of Joseph and Mary fleeing into Egypt with their newborn son, Jesus. Our Savior Himself lived as a refugee because His own land was not safe. In His public ministry, Jesus Himself was an itinerant man, moving from place to place, "with nowhere to lay His Head." (Mt 8:20)

Jesus reiterates the Old Testament command to love and care for the stranger, a criterion by which we will be judged: "For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me." (Mt 25:35) The Apostle Paul asserts the absolute equality of all people before God: "There is neither Jew nor Greek. . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28) In Christ, the human race is one before God, equal in dignity and rights.

When we welcome our immigrant sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself; for in the face of our neighbors, we see the face of Christ. This is made clear in the Gospel of Luke when the disciples, on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-15), become witnesses to the Truth by welcoming the stranger—Christ.

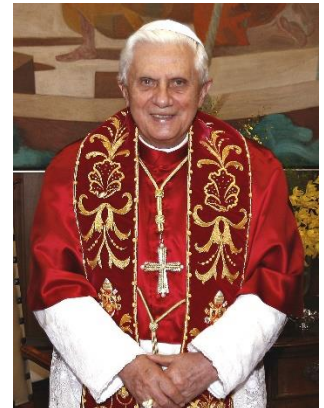
PAPAL TEACHINGS

In the first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII established that people have a right to work in order to survive and to support their families. Pope Pius XII, in the apostolic constitution *Exsul Familia*, reaffirmed that migrants have a right to a life with dignity, and therefore a right to migrate toward that end: “Then, according to the teachings of *Rerum Novarum*, the right of the family to a life worthy of human dignity is recognized. When this happens, migration attains its natural scope....”



In the encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII articulated both the right to migrate and the right not to migrate: “Every human being has the right to the freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of their country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate and take up residence elsewhere.”

In the 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI examined the relationship between mass migration and authentic human development. Pope Benedict highlighted the “significant contribution” that migrants give to their host countries through their labor, and warns against treating migrant people as commodities. All human beings are endowed with basic human rights. Pope Benedict noted the important relationship among poverty, unemployment, and the dignity of work. Any authentic form of development should focus on creating conditions that enable people to both find work in their community and provide educational opportunities for their children.



Agencia Brasill



Pope Francis continued Pope Benedict XVI’s themes in a 2013 homily on the Italian island of Lampedusa, reminding us that we have become “a society that has forgotten the experience of weeping, of ‘suffering with’” displaced persons seeking a better life for their families. He called on us to ask the Lord to “wipe out [whatever attitude] of Herod remains in our hearts” and to ask for the grace to “weep over our indifference, to weep over the cruelty in the world, in ourselves, and even in those who anonymously make socio-economic decisions that open [the] way to tragedies” that erect barriers to authentic human development for our migrant brothers and sisters.

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (JANUARY 14, 2018)

“Welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating migrants and refugees”

Dear brothers and sisters!

“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34).



Throughout the first years of my pontificate, I have repeatedly expressed my particular concern for the lamentable situation of many migrants and refugees fleeing from war, persecution, natural disasters, and poverty. This situation is undoubtedly a “sign of the times” which I have tried to interpret, with the help of the Holy Spirit, ever since my visit to Lampedusa on 8 July 2013. When I instituted the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, I wanted a particular section – under my personal direction for the time being – to express the Church’s concern for migrants, displaced people, refugees, and victims of human trafficking.

Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (*Matthew 25:35-43*). The Lord entrusts to the Church’s motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future.^[1] This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience – from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will, who are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness, wisdom, and foresight, each according to their own abilities.

In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that “our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: *to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate*”.^[2]

Considering the current situation, *welcoming* means, above all, offering broader options for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries safely and legally. This calls for a concrete commitment to increase and simplify the process for granting humanitarian visas and for reunifying families. At the same time, I hope that a greater number of countries will adopt private and community sponsorship programs, and open humanitarian corridors for particularly vulnerable refugees. Furthermore, special temporary visas should be granted to people fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries. Collective and arbitrary expulsions of migrants and refugees are not suitable solutions, particularly where people are returned to countries which cannot guarantee respect for human dignity and fundamental rights.^[3] Once again, I want to emphasize the importance of offering migrants and refugees adequate and dignified initial accommodation. “More widespread programs of welcome, already initiated in different places, seem to favor a personal encounter and allow for greater quality of service and increased guarantees of success”.^[4] The principle of the centrality of the human person, firmly stated by my beloved Predecessor, Benedict XVI,^[5] obliges us to always prioritize personal safety over national security. It is necessary, therefore, to ensure that agents in charge of border control are properly trained. The situation of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees requires that they be guaranteed personal safety and access to basic services. For the sake of the fundamental dignity of every human person, we must strive to find alternative solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorization.^[6]



The second verb – *protecting* – may be understood as a series of steps intended to defend the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, independent of their legal status.^[7] Such protection begins in the country of origin, and consists in offering reliable and verified information before departure, and in providing safety from illegal recruitment practices.^[8] This must be ongoing, as far as possible, in the country of migration, guaranteeing them adequate consular assistance, the right to personally retain their identity documents at all times, fair access to justice, the possibility of opening a personal bank account, and a minimum sufficient to live on. When duly recognized and

valued, the potential and skills of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are a true resource for the communities that welcome them.^[9] This is why I hope that, in countries of arrival, migrants may be offered freedom of movement, work opportunities, and access to means of communication, out of respect for their dignity. For those who decide to return to their homeland, I want to emphasize

the need to develop social and professional reintegration programs. The *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* provides a universal legal basis for the protection of underage migrants. They must be spared any form of detention related to migratory status and must be guaranteed regular access to primary and secondary education. Equally, when they come of age, they must be guaranteed the right to remain and to enjoy the possibility of continuing their studies. Temporary custody or foster programs should be provided for unaccompanied minors and minors separated from their families.^[10] The universal right to a nationality should be recognized and duly certified for all children at birth. The statelessness which migrants and refugees sometimes fall into can easily be avoided with the adoption of “nationality legislation that is in conformity with the fundamental principles of international law.”^[11] Migratory status should not limit access to national healthcare and pension plans, nor affect the transfer of their contributions if repatriated.



Promoting essentially means a determined effort to ensure that all migrants and refugees – as well as the communities which welcome them – are empowered to achieve their potential as human beings, in all the dimensions which constitute the humanity intended by the Creator.^[12] Among these, we must recognize the true value of the religious dimension, ensuring to all foreigners in any country the freedom of religious belief and practice. Many migrants and refugees have abilities which must be appropriately recognized and valued. Since “work, by its nature, is meant to unite peoples”,^[13] I encourage a determined effort to promote the social and professional inclusion of migrants and refugees, guaranteeing for all – including those seeking asylum – the possibility of employment, language instruction, and active citizenship, together with sufficient information provided in their mother tongue. In the case of underage migrants, their involvement in labor must be regulated to prevent exploitation and risks to their normal growth and development. In 2006, Benedict XVI highlighted how, in the context of migration, the family is “a place and resource of the culture of life and a factor for the integration of values”.^[14] The family’s integrity must always be promoted, supporting family reunifications – including grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings – independent of financial requirements. Migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees with disabilities must be granted greater assistance and support. While I recognize the praiseworthy efforts, thus far, of many countries, in terms of international cooperation and humanitarian aid, I hope that the offering of this assistance will take into account the needs (such as medical and social assistance, as well as education) of developing countries which receive a significant influx of migrants and refugees. I also hope that local communities, which are vulnerable and facing material hardship, will be included among aid beneficiaries.^[15]

The final verb – *integrating* – concerns the opportunities for intercultural enrichment brought about by the presence of migrants and refugees. Integration is not “an assimilation that leads migrants to suppress or to forget their own cultural identity. Rather, contact with others leads to discovering

their ‘secret’, to being open to them in order to welcome their valid aspects and thus contribute to knowing each one better. This is a lengthy process that aims to shape societies and cultures, making them more and more a reflection of the multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings”.^[16] This process can be accelerated by granting citizenship free of financial or linguistic requirements, and by offering the possibility of special legalization to migrants who can claim a long period of residence in the country of arrival. 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. I wish to stress the special case of people forced to abandon their country of arrival due to a humanitarian crisis. These people must be ensured adequate assistance for repatriation and effective reintegration programs in their home countries.

In line with her pastoral tradition, the Church is ready to commit herself to realizing all the initiatives proposed above. Yet in order to achieve the desired outcome, the contribution of political communities and civil societies is indispensable, each according to their own responsibilities.



At the United Nations Summit held in New York on 19 September 2016, world leaders clearly expressed their desire to take decisive action in support of migrants and refugees to save their lives and protect their rights, sharing this responsibility on a global level. To this end, the states committed themselves to drafting and approving, before the end of 2018, two Global Compacts, one for refugees and the other for migrants.

Dear brothers and sisters, in light of these processes currently underway, the coming months offer a unique opportunity to advocate and support the concrete actions which I have described with four verbs. I invite you, therefore, to use every occasion to share this message with all political and social actors involved (or who seek to be involved) in the process which will lead to the approval of the two Global Compacts.

Today, 15 August, we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. The Holy Mother of God herself experienced the hardship of exile (*Matthew* 2:13-15), lovingly accompanied her Son’s journey to Calvary, and now shares eternally his glory. To her maternal intercession we entrust the hopes of all the world’s migrants and refugees and the aspirations of the communities which welcome them, so that, responding to the Lord’s supreme commandment, we may all learn to love the other, the stranger, as ourselves.

Vatican City, 15 August 2017

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

FRANCIS

IMMIGRATION STATEMENT FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MINNESOTA

“Unlocking the Gate in Our Hearts”

*A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of Minnesota
on the Need for Federal Immigration Reform*

March 2012

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, are deeply concerned about the nation’s immigration policy. It is inconsistent, ineffective, and does not promote the common good.



The lack of an effective, coherent national policy has led to the introduction of many bills in state legislatures around the country, including in Minnesota, that seek to address the complex issue of immigration.

Such bills are a response to the failure of the current federal immigration laws and regulations to halt illegal immigration and the resulting economic, social, and fiscal impact this has had on many state and local governments.

Enforcement-focused state legislation, however, often divides immigrant families and criminalizes the efforts of those who work with immigrants. State legislation cannot repair a failed national policy.

Thus, we seek to reiterate our support for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level, as well as propose the relevant principles that should guide those reforms.

We recognize that finding solutions to the plight of immigrants today will sometimes necessitate the overcoming of boundaries in the heart, not just on the land. People erect walls for protection when they feel threatened.

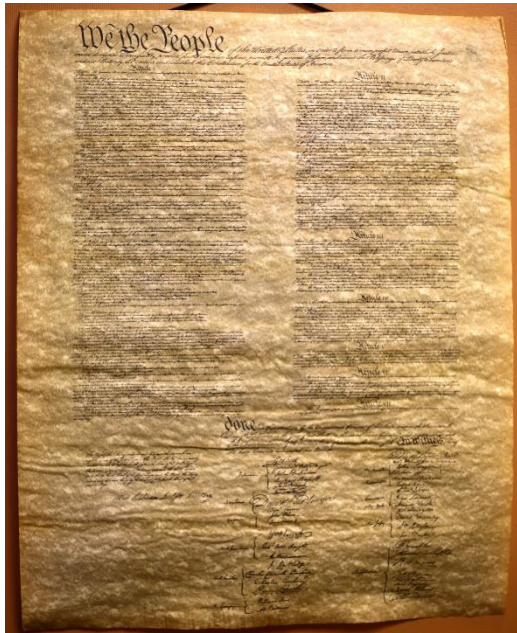
At some point, however, we must reach out to human persons in need, and the demands of our common human nature compel us to open a gate in the wall, so that what human dignity demands is not denied to a sister or brother. But before a gate finds its way into the walls outside, there must be a gate that opens in the heart.

This is what the Good Samaritan did: without denying the differences that kept Jews and Samaritans apart, he gave the assistance that was demanded of him by the universal law of love—the law of our common humanity—by supplying the basic human needs of a poor stranger.

Like the Samaritan, we must see all people, including immigrants and undocumented workers who may be different from us, as children made in the image and likeness of God, and fashion our response to their needs accordingly.

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Pursuing Life, Liberty, and Happiness While Recognizing Obligations



The Church's perspective on immigration is rooted in her teaching that every human person is created in God's image and has God-given dignity, rights, and duties.

America's founders properly understood that human rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are universal and inalienable. Governments merely recognize and respect these rights; they do not create them.

The human right to life—the foundation of every other right—implies the right to emigrate. A dignified existence that preserves life requires food, shelter, clothing, and economic opportunity. Political instability, economic distress, religious persecution, or other conditions that offend basic human dignity may require one to seek these basic necessities in another country.

The right to emigrate, however, is not absolute. Immigrants are obliged to respect and abide by the laws and traditions of the countries in which they come to reside, and must work toward building solidarity with citizens of their new country of residence.

Catholic teaching also recognizes the sovereignty of nations to secure their borders and make decisions about the identity and number of immigrants they allow into their countries. Our government has the duty to consider immigration's impact on the domestic economy and our national security. Yet, we must always make sure that we are not exaggerating these concerns in ways that deny the basic humanitarian needs of good people seeking refuge in our country.

It is often true that undocumented workers may break immigration laws to come to the United States. We wish to emphasize that a concern for upholding the law supports the common good. But it is also true that laws that undermine human dignity, separate families, and which prevent the exercise of basic human rights are unjust laws in need of reform. Good laws should not and need not exclude the possibility of mercy.

The United States is a nation of immigrants and our unique historical experience shows the important contributions—social, cultural, and economic—that immigrants have made and continue to make to American society. Although immigrants have not always been received with hospitality, Minnesotans, like all Americans, have a responsibility to comfort and welcome the stranger in their midst.

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Principled Immigration Policy

We believe, with our brother bishops around the country, that policy proposals in this complex area should be assessed by five key principles:

- Persons have the right to seek economic opportunities in their homeland; conditions ought to be such that persons can work and support their families in dignity and safety;
- Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families when they are unable to find work and therefore are unable to support their families at home;
- Sovereign nations have a right to protect and control their borders for the common good;
- Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection; and
- The human rights and human dignity of all persons, including undocumented immigrants, should be respected.

In addition, any just immigration policy should also:

- Uphold the human dignity of all persons and work against any injustice that compromises the dignity of immigrants;
- Promote and give priority to the reunification of families; and
- Recognize the rich contribution to the community by those immigrants and migrants who work and live here.

These Catholic moral principles are consistent with America's founding ideals and aspirations to be one nation under God, a people made up of many races and creeds.

Based on these principles the American bishops support comprehensive immigration policy reform that secures our national borders and provides undocumented immigrants the opportunity to earn permanent residency and eventual citizenship.

Such reform should include:

- an earned legalization program for foreign nationals of good moral character;
- policies designed to keep families together;
- a revamped temporary worker program that protects both the workers who come to the United States and U.S.-citizen workers;
- the restoration of immigrants' due process rights; and
- an effort to meaningfully address the root cause of migration, such as underdevelopment and poverty in countries of immigrant origin.



Moreover, such reform would include the targeted, proportionate, and humane enforcement of immigration laws.

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Taking Action

Legislation at the state level cannot achieve necessary reform of national policy. Such legislation also could result in conflicting laws among the states that could lead to the abuse of human rights, disruptions of families in ways that adversely affect children, and send a message of hostility when Jesus calls us to welcome the stranger, and to love others as He has loved us.

The more fruitful approach would be for public officials in our state, and all of us as citizens, to petition Congress and the President to courageously enact comprehensive immigration reform.

We encourage members of the Minnesota Legislature to reject any measures that are in opposition to the fundamental human dignity of immigrants—especially the undocumented; and we encourage the Minnesota congressional delegation in Washington, D.C. to work for just and compassionate reform of the nation's immigration system.

Finally, we ask that people join us in prayer to God for a just, yet merciful solution to the plight of immigrants in our country.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM THE U.S. BISHOPS



During the past several years, the United States Conference of Bishops (USCCB) and the Bishops of Minnesota have come out with a number of statements together and individually that address the issue of immigration in the state.

For archived immigration statements, and a wealth of other resources head to: <https://www.mncatholic.org/advocacyarea/immigration-sunday-mn/>.

MIGRATION FACTS

Provided by the USCCB

Immigration Reform

Position: The Catholic Bishops and the Church support humane immigration reform. We must reform our broken system that separates families and denies due process.

Facts:

- Since 2010, 3.6 million immigrants have become naturalized US citizens.
- Unauthorized immigrants also pay a wide range of taxes, including sales taxes where applicable and property taxes – directly if they own and indirectly if they rent. Estimates state that unauthorized migrants pay an estimated 11.64 billion dollars every year in state and local taxes.
- It can take upwards of a decade for legal permanent residents to reunify with immediate family members from Mexico, the Philippines, and other countries. (Congressional Research Service)

Refugee Protection

Position: USCCB is the largest private refugee resettlement agency in the United States, helping to resettle more than one million refugees in the United States since 1975.

Facts:

- The top five populations resettled during Fiscal Year (FY) 2015: Congo, Syria, Burma, Iraq, and Somalia.
- 12,000 Syrian refugees resettled in the United States since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. (Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration)
- According to the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 66 million persons were displaced in the world at the end of 2015. (UNHCR)

Unaccompanied Children and Families from Central America

Position: Unaccompanied children arrive at our borders without their parent or legal guardian with them. In recent years, many of these children were from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Most are fleeing grave violence, gang recruitment and are seeking to reunify with family in the United States.



Facts:

- In FY 2015, Mexico deported 165,000 Central Americans. The number detained in Mexico has tripled in the past four years amid growing pressure and economic support from the US to stem the flow. (The Guardian)
- 73% of unaccompanied children who had legal representation won their immigration case in the United States, compared to 15% who were unrepresented. (American Bar Association)

Immigrant Detention

Position: Immigrant detention is a growing industry in this country, with Congress allocating as much as \$2 billion a year to maintain and expand it. Due to mandatory detention laws, people who are not flight risks or risks to national security and are extremely vulnerable, such as asylum-seekers, families, and victims of human trafficking, are being held unnecessarily in detention.

Facts:

- In FY 2015, the Department of Homeland Security detained 406,595 immigrants compared to 486,651 in FY 2014; it is required that 34,000 beds are filled each day. (Department of Homeland Security)
- Community-based alternatives to detention programs cost on average \$10.55 per person per day, as compared to \$164 per person per day for detention. (GAO)

Human Trafficking



Position: Human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. The Catholic Church has long objected to this practice as an affront to human dignity.

Facts:

- Estimates vary, but as many as 17,500 persons are trafficked into the United States annually.
- Although sex trafficking remains a serious problem, the two largest trafficking cases in the United States involved labor trafficking, in Guam and in New York (Long Island).

CHURCH TEACHING ON REFUGEES



“... suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him. So, Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt’ (Matthew 2:13-14).

As Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were forced to flee their homeland, becoming refugees in search of safety, so, too, are millions of individuals and families today. Whether fleeing genocide, terrorism, war, or gangs, these acts of violence and persecution continue to force people into unfamiliar lands. As Catholics, we are called to help provide refuge for those in need.

Pope Saint John Paul II, during an address to refugees in the Philippines in 1981, referred to the plight of refugees as “perhaps the greatest tragedy of all human tragedies of our time.” What can be done then to help bring an end to this tragedy? In the Vatican document, [“Refugees: A Challenge to Solidarity”](#) states,

“The problem of refugees must be confronted at its roots, that is, at the level of the very causes of exile. The first point of reference should not be the interests of the State or national security, but the human person, so that the need to live in community, a basic requirement of the very nature of human beings, will be safeguarded.”

It may seem daunting for any one person to address the root problems of the violence that often lead individuals and families to seek refuge. What, then, can any one person do? The same document reminds us,

“The responsibility to offer refugees hospitality, solidarity, and assistance lies first of all with the local Church. She is called on to incarnate the demands of the Gospel, reaching out without distinction towards these people in their moment of need and solitude. Her task takes on various forms: personal contact; defense of the rights of individuals and groups; the denunciation of the injustices that are at the root of this evil; action for the adoption of laws that will guarantee their effective protection; education against xenophobia; the creations of groups of volunteers and

of emergency funds; pastoral care. She also seeks to instill in refugees a respectful behavior and an openness towards the host country.”

Within this statement, we see concrete ways to serve refugees in our own parishes and communities, whether it is making a personal contact with a newly settled refugee neighbor, advocating for laws that will provide for safety from the violence refugees have fled, or giving your time or money to welcome and resettle refugees. In our companion *Activity and Resource Guide*, you will find further concrete ways to welcome and *Share the Journey* of refugees and migrants.

Below you will find answers to some commonly asked questions regarding refugees.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING REFUGEES

Excerpted from USCCB – Justice for Immigrants ([Download PDF here](#))

“Migrants trust that they will encounter acceptance, solidarity, and help, that they will meet people who will sympathize with the distress and tragedy experienced by others, recognize the values and resources the latter have to offer, and are open to sharing humanly and materially with the needy and disadvantaged.” — Pope Francis, Message for the 2013 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, October 12, 2012

Who is a refugee?

Under U.S. law, a refugee is a person located outside of the United States who is forced to flee his or her home country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of his or her nationality, race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Refugees do not voluntarily choose to migrate but instead do so out of immediate necessity – often in the context of civil unrest, armed conflict, or other violence motivated by one of the five factors listed above and carried out by a state actor, an individual colluding with the state, or an individual whom the state cannot control.



What is the current state of the refugee system internationally?

Current levels of displacement are some of the highest ever recorded. Worldwide, there are 65.3 million people who have been forced out of their homes (with an estimated 34,000 people displaced per day). While the majority of forced migrants remain in their home countries, 21.3 million have been forced to flee and seek refuge in other countries. Over half of these refugees are under the age of 18.

Only those individuals who are considered to be the most vulnerable are referred for resettlement in a third country. Despite the extent of global displacement, less than 1% of refugees are submitted for resettlement worldwide. The United States traditionally resettles over half of these individuals. In Fiscal Year 2016, the United States resettled just under 85,000 refugees, with the most coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Ethiopia, Syria and Iraq. In recent years, there has also been an increased flow of refugees from Central America to the United States.

How does the processing system work?



Each year, the President of the United States authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. This number, described as the “Presidential Determination,” is based on a consultative process between Congress, the President, and various federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS). A refugee is typically referred to the United States by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an embassy, or an authorized non-governmental

organization (NGO). A government-funded Resettlement Support Center (RNC) then facilitates the application process by completing application paperwork and gathering biometric and biographical information needed for the determination and vetting process. During this application process, which typically takes 18 to 24 months to complete, the prospective refugee remains outside of the United States.

Prospective refugees to the United States undergo a rigorous and thorough screening process that includes vetting through databases held by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, DOS, and DHS. In addition, the refugee is interviewed by a highly-trained U.S. Citizenship

and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer to determine eligibility to the U.S. resettlement program and admissibility to the country. Further review is conducted if an individual's application raises safety or national security concerns and, ultimately, he or she will not be resettled in the United States if such concerns are not resolved. Once USCIS conditionally approves the applicant, he or she must complete a medical examination. Those individuals who receive approval for resettlement undergo a final screening by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection prior to entry into the country.

Admitted refugees are assigned to an experienced resettlement agency in the U.S. prior to arrival in order to help ensure their welcome and successful integration into our country. Once in the United States, refugees engage in cultural orientation, English lessons, medical evaluations, and other forms of social support through the resettlement community and other organizations.

What is the Catholic Church's teaching on refugees?

It is a core Catholic teaching that every human being is created in the image of God and is therefore entitled to dignity and respect. The Catholic Church views assisting those in need as a fundamental Christian duty that is derived directly from the life of mercy of Christ, who himself was a migrant and a child of refugees. We as Christians are called to welcome our new neighbors with the same love and compassion we would want ourselves to be shown in a time of persecution. We must remember that refugees from all over the world are sent to our communities and are fleeing danger, exploitation, and persecution.

What is the Catholic Church's role in U.S. refugee resettlement?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) seeks to fulfill the teachings of the Church in the arena of migration. USCCB/MRS is one of nine NGOs in the United States that resettles refugees and advocates for the refugee community. Through cooperative agreements with the federal government, USCCB/MRS works in coordination with partner agencies around the United States to welcome and ensure that the basic needs of each arriving refugee are adequately met. USCCB/MRS also engages in assessment trips to regions with large refugee populations. Find our reports [here](#).



LITURGY GUIDE

READINGS

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

Rise up in splendor! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; But upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: Your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; All from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Responsorial: Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

R. (cf. 11) **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute.
All kings shall pay him homage,
all nations shall serve him.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;



the lives of the poor he shall save.
R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Brothers and sisters:
You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace
that was given to me for your benefit,
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
It was not made known to people in other generations
as it has now been revealed
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
that the Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the same body,
and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod called the Magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.



GENERAL INTERCESSION EXAMPLES

For immigrants, migrants, refugees, and all newcomers, that our parish and parishioners be the loving “face of Christ” for them in their time of fear, uncertainty, and need.

For our immigrant, refugee, and asylum-seeking sisters and brothers, may they help to build harmonious and healthy communities wherever they may live.

For Pope Francis, (Arch)bishop_____, priests, deacons, women religious, and missionaries, that they may have the strength and fortitude to lead and guide us as agents of God’s mercy, justice, and love for immigrants and all vulnerable people.

For our political leaders and public servants, that they may implement and support policies that promote family unity and reunification, and that uphold the basic rights and human dignity of every person.

For our community gathered here today, that as we build and deepen our relationship with Christ we may come to a greater understanding of our vocation to love, and that this understanding helps transform our relationships as sources of the light of Christ in the world.

For unaccompanied migrant children, and for the migrant women and their children who are seeking asylum and being held in detention centers at the U.S. borders, that they may be protected from harm and abuse, and that they are ultimately reunited with loving family.



For migrant workers, that they may work in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for and respect what they provide to our communities and broader economies.

For the victims and buyers of forced labor and all forms of human trafficking, that they recognize the God-given dignity of every human being and help break the cycle of slavery for themselves and others.

For an end to the violence, poverty, and despair that displace so many of our sisters and brothers from their homes and homelands, especially in Syria and in Central American countries that are currently plagued with violence.

MUSIC IDEAS

Following are some music examples that could be fitting for your Statewide Immigration Sunday celebration.

Mass setting and general resources:

- **Missa ad Gentes:** Maryknoll Centennial Mass, Michael Joncas, GIA Publications
Various movements of this Mass setting musically represent both the Maryknoll community's United States heritage and the diverse cultures in which Maryknoll missionaries serve—cultures that represent some of our most vibrant immigrant communities in this country. Cultural influences represented in the settings include Portuguese, Hispanic, Russian, and Asian. The text also incorporates Latin, which allows us to celebrate our common heritage and unity as Catholics.
- **Library of Gregorian chant propers:** For those parish communities that have a resurging interest in older sacred music traditions, the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest offers the following pdf: http://www.institute-christ-king.org/uploads/music/MassEpiphany_lg.pdf.

Other suggestions:

Gathering Song

- O Sanctissima/O Most Virtuous
- Sing a New Church, Nettleton, OCP Publications
- Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo/We Are the Body of Christ, Jaime Cortez, OCP Publications

Responsorial Psalm

- Every Nation on Earth (Ps. 72), Michael Joncas, GIA Publications
- Lord, Every Nation, Jesse Manibusan, OCP Publications

Alleluia

- Celtic Alleluia, Fintan O'Carroll and Christopher Walker: Alternative verse for the Feast of the Epiphany: A holy day has dawned.
Adore the Lord, you nations,
for today a light
has come on the earth.

Preparation of the Gifts

- Bread of Life (Advent/Christmas setting) Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications
- Let Us Be Bread, Thomas J. Porter, GIA Publications, Inc.
- Ubi Caritas/Where Love Is

Eucharistic Song

- Here I Am, Lord, Dan Schutte, OCP Publications
- Lead Us to Your Table, Tom Tomaszek and Steve Angrisano, OCP Publications
- Adoro te Devote (I Devoutly Adore You)
- Panis Angelicum (Bread of Angels)

Recessional

- Christ, Be Our Light, Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications
- City of God, Dan Schutte, OCP Publications
- Lead Me Lord, John Becker, OCP Publications
- We Are Called to Serve, Julie and Tim Smith, Resource Publications

READING REFLECTIONS

First Reading: *Isaiah 60:1-6*

This text from Isaiah speaks of the new Jerusalem—a time and a place where the glory of the Lord shines. God's presence within this city brings an extraordinary illumination, and nations are drawn to this light. This new Jerusalem is not one nation or one city. Rather, it is a place and a people that are in full knowledge of and in communion with the Lord, and who have learned to walk by the light of Christ. No nation can claim this title, and no people have yet learned what it means to live in right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of God's creation. Yet the images and the movements of this text point to ways in which we as a people—as a community, state, or nation—can walk in God's paths, thereby letting the Lord's light shine through us.



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Isaiah's reference to "nations," and to sons and daughters coming from afar, can lead us to think of people coming to our country today with a similar hope. They come not because our country is the new Jerusalem—far from it. But, they do come here with the hope of finding something better—something safer, more peaceful.

Today in the United States there are more than 40 million foreign-born residents. Some are naturalized citizens; others are trying to moving along the path to citizenship. Some are here as students; others are here for employment reasons.

Whatever their legal status, the majority of immigrants in the United States are here because they seek a better life for their families—not a life of luxury or a life of conspicuous consumption, nor a life dependent upon handouts, but a life simply of steady work, sustainable wages, and safety. In his 2016 message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis challenges communities and people who receive immigrants. He asks them to consider their new presence as an opportunity for "genuine human, social and spiritual growth, a growth which respects and promotes those values which make us ever more humane and help us to live a balanced relationship with God, others and creation."

Isaiah and other prophets in the Old Testament frequently remind the Hebrew people that they must show particular love and care for widows, orphans, and strangers—which, today, can often be a migrant family or a person new to our community. To be in right relationship with God requires that we are in right relationship with each other—which includes our call to show mercy, compassion, or assistance to the most vulnerable among us.

If the glory of the Lord is ever to shine among us, one of the challenges we must address in our society is where we fall short of helping our most vulnerable. Ironically, we can be guided in this task by the migrants we are called to help. Isaiah states: *Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.* (Isaiah 60:5) Our openness to the "other" has enormous opportunity to enrich our lives.

Second Reading: *Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6*

From his prison cell, St. Paul writes to the Christian community at Ephesus about the mystery that has been made known to him by the Spirit: that through the Gospel the gentiles are heirs with Israel, members together in the one body and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus. It is this mystery that had Paul writing earlier to the Christians at Galatia: *there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* (Gal. 3:28)



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The power of this message is that, as members of Christ's body, we all share in Christ's promise of a restored relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. Our sharing in the promise of salvation is a primary source of our dignity as human beings. It is why we need to live as a people redeemed, as a people marked by a sacred dignity. It is why we need to help one another realize our human dignity, which includes recognizing or meeting the basic needs of others that ensure their human dignity is upheld.

The Second Vatican Council fathers remind us that our sharing in Christ Jesus' promise of salvation is not just about looking beyond this world at what is to come. On the contrary: ". . . the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family . . . a body which already is a foreshadowing of the life that is to come." (*Gaudium et Spes*, 39) In other words, we are called to "make Thy Kingdom come," here on earth.

We do not need to look far for evidence that not all of God's children have attained a dignified life that is rightfully theirs as "made in the image and likeness of God." A dearth of economic opportunity confronting large segments of Latin America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere is placing significant strain on families and often presents them with very difficult choices. In Syria, forced migration is occurring on an epic scale, with Chaldean Catholics being persecuted for their religious beliefs, and being effectively wiped out in Iraq and the Middle East as the world sits watching. There are also those from Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, where the outbreak of gang violence has forced the migration of thousands of unaccompanied migrant children, and mothers with young children, who are fleeing from their violent communities for safety.

These refugees remind us how far we, as followers of Christ, are asked to go in welcoming the stranger among us. As St. Paul writes, we are one body, one Church, and no one should feel like a stranger. To be the Church is to recognize our unity in Christ. It is to welcome and recognize the human dignity and basic needs of new and old members in our communities—whichever she is, wherever he comes from, whatever their family's legal status.

If we are people who celebrate the Good News that everyone shares in the promise of Christ Jesus, we would not tolerate words or actions or public policies that diminish the human dignity or, in effect, create an underclass of immigrant people in our country.

We would recognize that "just laws" are not only laws that protect our border and ensure our nation's or our family's security, but that "just laws" are also laws that uphold the dignity and basic human needs of *all* families—that ensure basic access to healthcare for all children, that ensure access to sustainable work, that ensure access to food and a safe place to sleep. Anything less is



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our failure to respond to people in need: *Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.* (Mt. 25:40) Anything less is a failure to recognize that within our immigrant community there *grows the body of a new human family . . . a body which already is a foreshadowing of the life that is to come.* (*Gaudium et Spes*, 39)

Gospel: *Matthew 2:1-12*

The second chapter of Matthew's Gospel presents us with a powerful image of encounter. Wise men from the East arrive in Jerusalem, asking where the newborn king of the Jews might be found. King Herod sends them to Bethlehem to find the child. After locating the child and offering their gifts, the Wise Men take a different road to their own country in order to avoid Herod. Then, in the verse immediately following this reading, an angel of the Lord warns Joseph to flee with the infant child and his mother to Egypt—where the Holy Family live as refugees until Herod's death allows them to return to their homeland, Israel.

The Holy Family is present in the lives of the millions of migrants and refugees who leave their country seeking better life today. Christ is close to migrants, close to refugees, because he himself was one once. How should we then respond to the stranger in our midst?

The Gospel provides us with a guide. We know so well the story of the three kings, the three wise men who came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But more importantly than these precious material gifts is the gift of themselves they offered to the tiny king. By coming to Christ and encountering him personally, the Wise Men demonstrated that their deep reverence for dignity of the Christ-child. He was not a distant ruler to be placated with parcels sent impersonally. Instead, the wise men venerated the personhood of the Lord and his inherent dignity. They gave him *homage*.

How comforting must their arrival have been to Joseph and Mary, reassuring them that their son was the Promised One, was the King of Kings. This knowledge must have given them strength and solace during their flight to Egypt, knowing that whatever challenges they faced, their dignity had been affirmed through an encounter.

In a homily given on his first Pentecost as our pontiff, Pope Francis suggested that the word “encounter” is central to the way he thinks of Christian relationships. In the homily, he encourages the faithful to be fearless in the ways in which they look beyond their own needs and wants to those of others. He says that “in this ‘stepping out’ [of ourselves] it is important to be ready for encounter. For me this word is very important. Encounter with others... Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others.” With this line of thinking, Christians



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encounter other people in their imitation of Christ, but on top of that, the disciple encounters other people as a *response* to having an encounter with Christ in the first place.

We may not have gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh to offer our immigrant brothers and sisters—but we do have something the wise men offered to Christ: the gift of encounter. We are called to engage with those from distant lands not as problems, but as people. We are called to see Christ in them, and love them accordingly, through hospitality and support. Stepping out of our comfort zone can be difficult at times; and often serving others requires real sacrifice. But let us look to the three kings as our model, and strive to offer immigrants the same richness of encounter they gave to Our Lord.