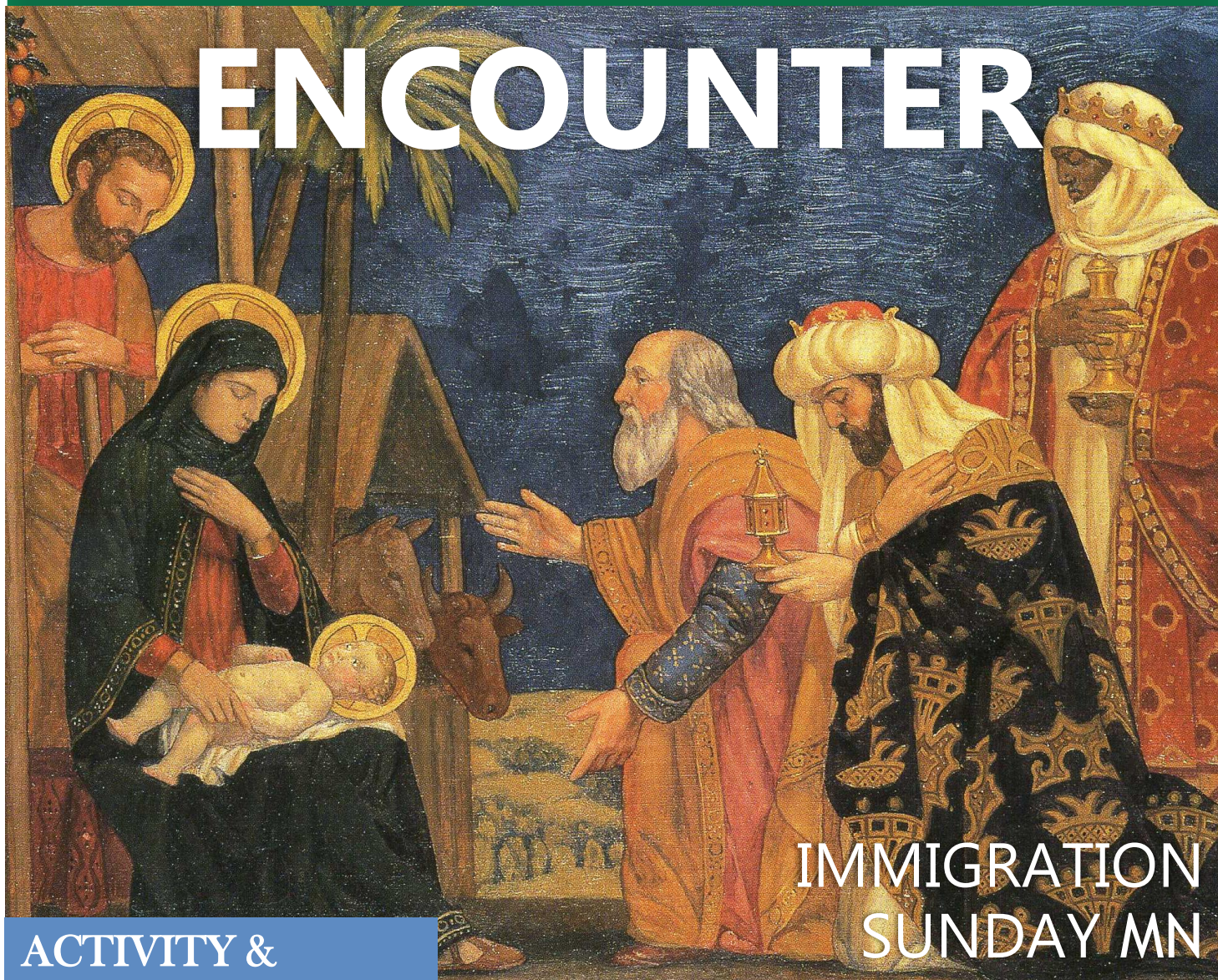


Creating Communities of **ENCOUNTER**



**ACTIVITY &
RESOURCE GUIDE**

**IMMIGRATION
SUNDAY MN**

Feast of Our Lord's Epiphany

January 8, 2017

USCCB National Migration Week
January 8-14, 2017





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ADVOCACY, EDUCATION & MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

ADVOCACY

When we consider the matter of migration, we must recognize that this is a worldwide phenomenon. All across the globe, families and individuals are increasingly feeling compelled to leave their home countries. Some are refugees from human trafficking or violence and civil war, like the Syrian refugees. Others are escaping political oppression or economic hardship. All seek a better future for themselves and their families. Yet, migration often leads to other problems, especially harm to the family.

This migration crisis calls us to remember our common humanity. This is the simple recognition that we are all one human family. Before we are citizens of this nation, we are foremost brothers and sisters—children of a loving God who invites us to a new relationship with one another. Thus, we *each* have a responsibility to work for the objective good of others, including those brothers and sisters who come from other lands. We have an obligation to protect the inherent and fundamental dignity of each person (*see* CCC 1897-1948).

Considering the migration crisis with an open heart and mind can be a challenge. Yet, the call to encounter strangers in our midst plays an important role in the lives of faithful Christians. 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. Often unfamiliar with the local tongue of the new country, not to mention its customs, the migrant needs the support of local communities so that he or she can better adjust to the new surroundings.

We encourage parishes not only to explore and reflect on the foundations of Catholic teaching concerning migration and immigrants, but to share meaningful ways to help promote and protect the human dignity of every person by building authentic communities of encounter.

Following is a list of six advocacy actions that can help you, your parish, and parish groups support and advocate for migrant families.

All links, as well as PDF versions of this Activity Guide and the Immigration Sunday Liturgy Planning Guide, are found on the MCC Immigration Sunday MN page (<https://mncatholic.org/immigration-sunday>).

1. Send an e-Postcard for Immigration Reform to Congress

Background

The U.S. immigration system continues to be broken and in need of repair. Parishioners can send an electronic postcard from the USCCB's Justice for Immigrants to their U.S. Senators and Representative, urging them to take action and pass compassionate federal immigration reform.

Link to electronic postcard is available under "What Can You Do?" at mncatholic.org/immigration-sunday

2. Write a Letter to the Editor

Background

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) is the perfect way to offer a rebuttal, add another perspective, or express your appreciation for an already-published article or commentary piece.

Tips

- **Keep it short** (150-250 words) – If you don't edit your LTE, the news outlet might edit it for you. Since they could cut out your main point, it's best to write something both punchy and brief.
- **Speak in your own voice.** Tell why the article matters to you. Talk about your faith, professional experience or knowledge of climate change. Be personal and authentic.
- **Get local.** Editors are generally more interested in letters that highlight local impacts. Can you relate the issues raised in a national piece on migration and immigration to issues impacting your own community?
- **Get personal.** Migration is about people on the move. Personalize your perspective with a story about people you know affected by migration- a family member or someone you know from your church.
- Follow these best practices:
 - **Reference a recent article (if possible).** Your letter is most likely to be published if it responds directly to the newspaper's recent coverage of a specific migration issue. Mention the article you're responding to by its headline and date.
 - **Send your LTE in the body of your email,** not as an attachment.
 - **Include contact information:** Include your full name, contact information, location, and profession or expertise (if relevant) in the email as well. (The paper will not print your contact information.)
- **Be timely** – Try to get your LTE in within 1-3 days after the relevant article is published.

Talking Points

- Catholics are called to stand with new American immigrants as our brothers and sisters. This is who we are. This is what we do.
- We belong to the same Church no matter where we're from. Our Catholic identity isn't based on where we live but on our faith in Jesus Christ. We're one family, and the Catholic Church is always our home.
- In Pope Francis we have a leader from Argentina, a country of immigrants. He is the son of immigrants and a native Spanish speaker. These issues are close to his heart.
- Immigration is about real people who are trying to find a better life and a new beginning. As Pope Francis stated, "Each migrant has a name, a face and a story."
- Welcoming immigrants is part of the Catholic Social Teaching and reflects the Biblical tradition to welcome the stranger.
- The Catholic Church has been welcoming immigrants to the United States since the nation's founding and has been integral in helping integrate into American culture.
- In addition to welcoming and caring for those in need, the Church continues to uphold the centrality of family reunification as a critical component of our immigration system.
- America is a better country due to the contributions of immigrants.



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- Forced displacement of people is at the highest level since World War Two, with more than 65 million people displaced around the world.
- Refugees are the most rigorously screened population coming into America. This screening happens before they ever set foot in our country. The United States has the most thorough background checks of immigrants of any nation in the world.

Sample Letters

Dear Editor:

Your recent article, [name of article], discussing the issue of immigration/refugees in the recent presidential campaign [and/or post-election cycle] was alarming [or reaffirming (depends on tone of article)]. [name of State or community] has a proud history of welcoming newcomers, including immigrants, refugees, and newly naturalized citizens.

It is imperative that our local communities continue to provide a warm and welcoming presence to newcomers, so that they can feel a part of the community and contribute to its ongoing prosperity. In fact, more than 40% of America's largest companies were founded either by immigrants or the children of immigrants. Newcomers, such as immigrants and refugees are indeed a part of our future community well-being.

OR (in an article that has a religious theme or mentions a bishop or Church leader)

Dear Editor,

Your recent article, [name of article], discussing the issue of immigration in the recent presidential campaign [and/or post-election cycle] was alarming [or reaffirming (depends on tone of article)]. As a Catholic, I have long held immigration and support for migrant communities as a central feature of my faith. We affirm that all people – immigrants and native born alike – are made in the image and likeness of God and are worthy of respect and support. As the Church celebrates National Migration Week this week, which provides an opportunity to raise awareness on its teachings related to migration, it is encouraging to see religious leaders stand in solidarity of migrants and encourage positive reforms that will help to fix our broken immigration system.

3. Help Those Impacted by the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Background

The political and humanitarian crisis in Syria is a serious concern for the Catholic Church and the bishops of the United States. In the past five years, at least four million Syrians have fled their country as a consequence of the civil war and the rise of ISIS. Most have fled to surrounding countries, especially Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, and many others have moved on to Europe with the hope of finding a place of peace and safety. Pope Francis and the Catholic bishops have called on the U.S. government and the international community to provide support to both Syrian refugees fleeing violence and to countries that have been at the forefront of this humanitarian effort. These recommendations include:

- Ending the conflict in Syria and Iraq



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- Building an inclusive and lasting peace to allow Syrian refugees—also including those who are ethnic and religious minorities—to return home and rebuild their countries.
- Providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees who have fled to neighboring refugee countries.
- Providing development aid to refugee host countries near Syria so they are able to properly welcome and care for the refugees.
- Providing 100,000 annual resettlement slots for the most vulnerable refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict.
- Designating an additional 100,000 refugees to be resettled in the U.S. from other countries.

Ways to help

- **Pray** that God provides his protection to Syrians and all other refugees displaced by violence and persecution.
www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/national-migration-week/upload/Prayer-for-Migrant-Families.pdf
- **Write** a letter to your members of Congress to take leadership on helping Syrian refugees.
<http://www.confrontglobalpoverty.org/issues/syrian-migrant-refugees/>
- **Visit** the USCCB page dedicated to the crisis for additional resources and background.
www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm
- **Contact** your local Catholic Charities agency to find out if it has a resettlement program and, if so, how you can assist them in their efforts to resettle refugees and help them build new lives of hope here in the United States. that God provides his protection to Syrians and all other refugees displaced by violence and persecution.
<http://www.usccb.org/about/resettlement-services/diocesan-resettlement-offices.cfm>
- **Donate** to the MRS' *Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR)* program, which provides parish and community volunteers an opportunity to help sponsor newly-arriving Syrian and other refugees and provide for their critical needs.
<http://www.usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/migration-and-refugee-services/index.cfm>

Resources for discussing the Syrian refugee crisis

- Talking points from USCCB Migration & Refugee Services
<http://bit.ly/1X8KHQj>
- Step-by-step explanation of the U.S. comprehensive refugee screening process, which averages two years
<http://www.rcusa.org/resettlement-process>
- USCCB statement of solidarity with Syrian refugees
<http://www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-127.cfm>

4. Reunite Migrant Families

Background

Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) provides community-based family reunification services to unaccompanied children who are in immigration proceedings. With support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, MRS through its national network of more than 200 social service agencies provides a necessary safety net for families who have been separated by migration. The MRS network provides home assessments and post-release services to strengthen recently reunified families and help them integrate into local communities.

There are ways for individuals to get involved with or financially help this effort. Visit the USCCB Family Reunification Program page for more details to share with parishioners:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/children-and-migration/family-reunification/index.cfm>

Or consider getting involved with a local MN organization dedicated to helping migrant children reunite with their families, Familias Juntas: <http://www.familiasjuntas.com/>

5. Assist Unaccompanied Migrant Children

Background

Central American children from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are migrating to the United States alone in record numbers. While not a new phenomenon, the number of children who are making the perilous journey alone has increased exponentially—6,775, on average, arrived between 2003—2011, and upwards of 90,000 are projected to arrive in Fiscal Year 2014. The Catholic Church has taken seriously the humanitarian and policy oriented aspects of this situation and is advocating on behalf of increased protections for migrant children and their families who are arriving in the United States.

Access the USCCB's Unaccompanied Migrant Child Resource Kit for ways to help:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/unaccompanied-migrant-children-resource-kit.cfm>

6. Join MCC's Catholic Advocacy Network

Background

The Catholic Advocacy Network includes thousands of Catholic and non-Catholic Minnesotans who are interested in working together to promote life and human dignity in Minnesota. Through periodic emails and a monthly E-Update, Network members are given simple, concrete ways to take action and to make an impact on social issues of concern for the Catholic Church, including federal immigration reform and local provisions to assist immigrants in our own communities. Membership is completely free and parishioners can join online at: www.mncatholic.org/actioncenter

EDUCATION

1. **Immigration-themed parish movie showing or book club reading.** Host a movie viewing or book discussion on an immigration-related topic. Examine the movie or book, and the issue(s) it confronts, through the lens of the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota.

Movie suggestions

- **ABRAZOS** follows the journey of a group of U.S. citizen children who travel 3,000 miles, from Minnesota to Guatemala, to their parents' homeland to meet their grandparents for the first time. It offers a first-hand account of the effects that the current U.S. immigration system has on Minnesota children and their families. (<http://abrazosthefilm.com/>)
- **The Least of These** provides an inside look at the federal government's practices associated with family detentions. (<http://theleastofthese-film.com>)
- **Dying to Live—a migrant's journey** is a look at the human face of the immigrant. It explores who these people are, why they leave their homes, and what they face in their journey. (<https://dyingtolive.nd.edu/>)

Book suggestions

- **On 'Strangers no Longer': perspectives on the historic U.S.-Mexican Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Migration** (www.justiceforimmigrants.org/OnStrangersNoLonger.htm)
- **Immigration and the Next America: Renewing the Soul of Our Nation** by Archbishop José Gomez (<https://www.osv.com/Shop/Product?ProductCode=T1422>)

2. **Facilitate a discussion based on the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization test:** Host an evening gathering to discuss immigration and the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota. At the beginning of the gathering, invite parishioners to take the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization test. However, do not tell parishioners where the test is from until after they have completed it. Discuss the test, personal perceptions of immigrants, and the struggles we all sometimes have with *welcoming the stranger*. Download the test from the USCIS website (www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1).
3. **Host a forum on migration or U.S. immigration policy:** Host a speaker or panel discussion on migration or immigration policy. Invite speakers from your community (business, education, faith, and legislative). Consider inviting immigrants from your parish or community to share their personal stories. Examine current immigration policies in both the United States and Minnesota. Discuss the issues in light of past, current, and proposed legislation. Contact MCC to help connect your school or parish to speakers or Catholic immigrants who may be willing to share their story: 651.227.8777.
4. **Educate on Catholic Social Teaching on immigration:** Offer a parish education program on Catholic Social Teaching on immigration. Use copies of the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota to facilitate discussion. Invite your local diocesan or Catholic Charities immigration contact. The statement is available on the MCC website at MNCatholic.org/immigration-sunday.



MINISTRY

PARISH COMMUNITY WELCOMING IDEAS

Meet and Greet at Liturgies. Develop a team whose ministry is to welcome people, be they regulars or newcomers, when they are entering the church.

Acknowledge / welcome newcomers by the priest after Mass or through the Mass intercessions.

Everyone is involved in the welcoming of newcomers—sometimes the most gratifying welcome a visitor can receive is from someone she wouldn't expect to welcome her, in a place she didn't expect it to happen.

House Blessings. Develop a team who will visit newcomers to the parish; have a priest come with to offer them a house blessing.

Baptismal teams. The Baptism of a child can be an important point of contact between your parish and newcomers. It can be used as an ideal opportunity to welcome new families—new life!—into your parish.

Connect with other local immigrant services. We often struggle to know how best to engage with newcomers in our communities. There will be many organizations working with immigrants in your local area. Contact them! They may be able to point to specific needs immigrants in your community have or to establish projects that you might support.

Celebrate the universality of God's faithful servants. Consider recognizing feast days that are significant to the cultures represented within your parish community. Reach out to parishioners who are from the culture of those saints you celebrate to find out what sacred traditions may be good to incorporate into the celebration. Beautiful sacred traditions are found in so many cultures!

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

- **Include youth in the advocacy activities.** Encourage children to get involved in their communities to give them an opportunity to advocate on behalf of their immigration neighbors and fellow parishioners—kids and families with whom they may be friends. Legislators do listen to children. While they may not yet have the right to vote, their parents DO!
- **Explore family history.** Ask children to bring in the oldest family photo they can find. Photocopy the family photo and have children write family stories about their photos. Mount photos and stories on a piece of cardstock. Frame each picture and story on a larger piece of construction paper and have children illustrate the frames. Create a large quilt with all the pictures. Display the quilt in the gathering space of your church.
- **Why did they leave home?** Invite immigrant parents or grandparents to speak about their experiences as immigrants. Have children interview their parents and grandparents.



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- **Ancestry interview.** Host a luncheon or tea party for grandparents and grandchildren. Provide an opportunity for children to interview their grandparents about their ancestry. Have children record their responses in homemade books.
- **Immigration tests.** Invite youth to take the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization exam, but do not tell youth where the exam is from prior to having them take it. Distribute copies of the actual exam, which can be accessed on the Internet at the following link. Allow time for discussion after youth complete the exam. (www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1)

ONLINE RESOURCES

Minnesota Catholic Conference Advocacy Area pages:

Migration (www.mncatholic.org/advocacy-areas/migration/)

Immigration Sunday MN (www.mncatholic.org/immigration-sunday/)

A resource page with background on the latest parish, state, and federal-based migration advocacy activities and priorities of the Catholic bishops of Minnesota.

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (www.cliniclegal.org)

CLINIC is a 501 (c) (3) organization created by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to support a rapidly growing network of community-based immigration programs and services.

Justice for Immigrants Campaign (www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

A USCCB advocacy organization calling for comprehensive immigration reform in Congress.

USCCB Office of Migration and Refugee Services (www.usccb.org/mrs/)

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

(www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/index.htm)

Papal Messages on Migration Archive (www.usccb.org/mrs/papalstatements.shtml)

Messages on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Minnesota State Demographic Center (<http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>)

The Minnesota State Demographic Center analyzes and distributes Minnesota and U.S. data.

Familias Juntas (<http://www.familiasjuntas.com/>)

A non-profit organization based in Worthington, MN, dedicated to reuniting immigrant families and shedding light on the challenges faced by newcomers to our state.