



A LENTEN STUDY LEADER GUIDE

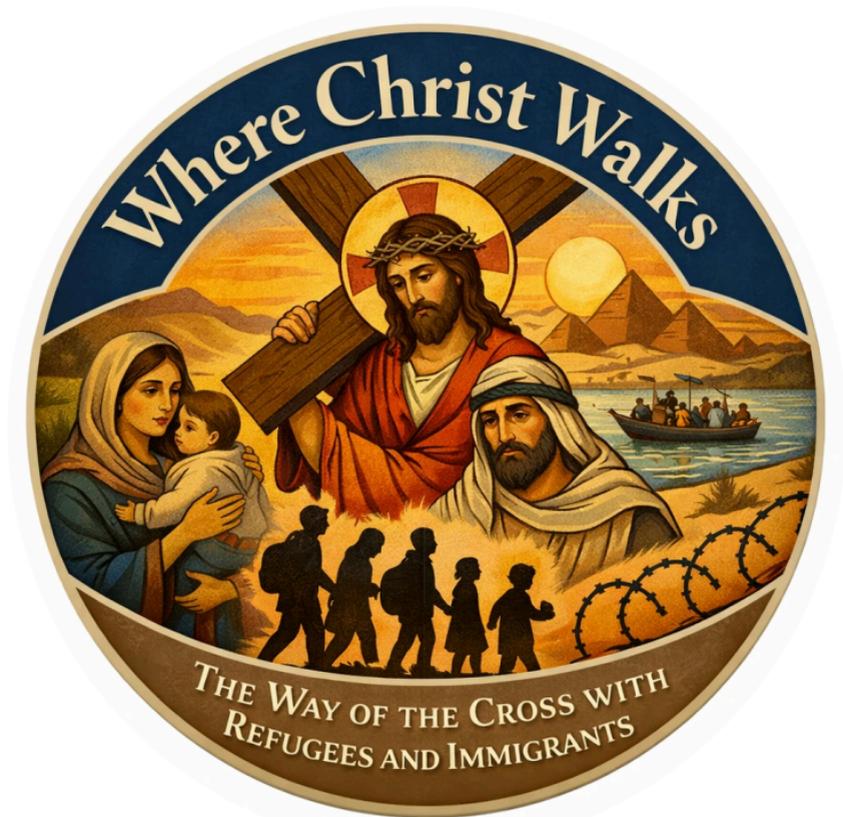
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Written and Prepared by

The Rev. Can. Dr. Samira Page

Canon for Multicultural Mission- Episcopal Diocese of Dallas

Founder and Executive Director- Gateway of Grace



More than 122 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced

The Lord executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deu. 10:18-19)

AN INTRODUCTION

This study invites us into a journey that is simultaneously **ancient and urgent** — a pilgrimage that begins with Abraham's obedience, traverses the wilderness of Hagar, walks in the prison of Joseph, and winds through exile and solidarity to meet the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus.

At the heart of this study is a simple but profound conviction: **God is encountered in the stranger** — especially those forced by violence, persecution, or disaster to leave their homes. As Christians shaped by Scripture, we are called not merely to admire this reality from afar, but to learn from it, be transformed by it, and participate in the work of compassion God has revealed throughout salvation history.

A Global Crisis of Displacement

We are living in a moment of **unprecedented global displacement**. According to the most recent reporting by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), **more than 122 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced** — driven from their homes by war, violence, persecution, human rights violations, and public disorder. This is the highest level recorded in history.

Among these men, women, and children are:

- **Refugees** who have crossed international borders in search of safety
- **Asylum seekers** awaiting determinations of protection
- **Internally displaced persons** who remain within their own countries but have lost their homes

While the numbers may vary slightly depending on definitions and reporting sources, the scale is unmistakable: **tens of millions of families have been uprooted from the lives they knew and the places they called home.**

Displacement today arises not only from armed conflict, but also from interconnected crises including political instability, climate change, and economic collapse — and the pace of forced human movement shows little sign of abating.

AN INTRODUCTION

The Church's Historic Witness

The Christian Church has not stood apart from these movements of people. In every era, believers have been drawn— by the compassion of Christ and the command of Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit— to serve the vulnerable, especially those on the move:

- In the early centuries, Christians took in those fleeing persecution under Rome, offering burial, hospitality, and care when others abandoned them.
- In the post–World War II era, faith communities were central to the resettlement of millions of refugees from Europe, helping with housing, employment, and integration.
- In the United States, religious agencies such as Episcopal Migration Ministries, Church World Service and Catholic Charities have been key partners in welcoming refugees, providing cultural orientation and accompaniment as part of the broader resettlement process.
- Around the world, the Church continues to advocate for the rights and dignity of migrants and displaced persons, drawing upon Scriptures such as *Leviticus 19:33–34* and *Matthew 25:35*, which call Christians to welcome “the stranger” as neighbor. This witness is not peripheral to Christian identity; it flows from the heart of the Gospel.

AN INTRODUCTION

Why This Study Matters Now — Especially in the U.S.

In the U.S. today, conversations about migration are often **politicized, polarized, or reduced to statistics**. Public discourse frequently overlooks the **humanity** of those who are seeking safety, as well as the **deep biblical roots** of hospitality and welcome.

Yet this moment calls for a **different posture** — one grounded not in fear, but in the cruciform love evident in the life of Jesus Christ.

This study is crucial now because:



The scale of global displacement is historic

Tens of millions remain uprooted with no immediate return in sight.



The U.S. remains a crossroads

Politically, socially, and pastorally— where questions of refuge and welcome challenge the Church to embody the reconciliation and mercy we proclaim.



Faith communities shape culture and conscience

As people of Scripture, we are uniquely positioned to articulate a response that honors both the dignity of the human person and the common good.

AN INTRODUCTION

In this study, we engage Scripture not primarily to answer policy questions, but to sharpen our **spiritual vision**: to see God's activity in displacement, to recognize Christ in those on the margins, and to allow the way of the cross to shape our response.

How This Study Works

Each week, participants will:

- Read a biblical narrative of displacement
- Identify a pattern of God's work
- Reflect on what the story reveals about Christ's way of love
- Bring that reflection into today's world
- Engage in faithful conversation and action rooted in the Gospel

As leaders, your role is not to have all the answers, but to create space where hearts can be opened, silence is honored, honest conversation is welcomed, and the Holy Spirit can do the work of deep formation.

A Call to Leader Formation

This study is not a side project. It is a **discipleship journey**— one that calls the Church to walk with Christ into the places that make us uncomfortable, humble, and utterly dependent on God's grace.

May this journey change us— in how we see the world, how we see one another, and how we see Christ who walks with and within all who are displaced.

Amen.

Patterns of Displacement



Abraham
| Called

Displacement
comes
through
God's call.



Hagar |
Others' Sin

Displacement
comes from
injustice.



Joseph |
Silence

Displacement
requires
waiting in
silence.



Moses |
Listening

Displacement
forms leaders
who listen.



Ruth |
Chosen Love

Displacement
becomes a
choice for love



Holy Family
Divine

Displacement
entered by
Christ himself.



Apostles
Pilgrim

Displacement
creates God's
pilgrim people.

WEEK 1

ABRAHAM: CALLED INTO DISPLACEMENT

Genesis 12 marks a rupture in the biblical story. Until now, humanity has attempted to secure itself through land, power, and self-preservation— always ending in division and violence. God’s response is not domination but calling.

In the ancient world, land was not simply property; it was identity, inheritance, and protection. Kinship networks ensured survival. To leave one’s land was to become exposed— socially, economically, and physically. When God commands Abram to go, God is not offering a spiritual exercise. God is dismantling the structures Abram depends upon to live.

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house” (Genesis 12:1) is a command to surrender certainty.

Abram does not ask questions. He does not negotiate terms. He goes.

This is the first truth Lent places before us: God’s promise often begins with loss.

Jesus standing condemned before Pilate reveals the same pattern. He does not defend Himself. He relinquishes safety. The Incarnate Son allows Himself to be judged, displaced from honor, stripped of protection. God’s saving work does not begin with victory, but with vulnerability.



Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

O God who called Abraham
away from what was known
and led him by promise alone,
strip us of the false securities
that keep us from trusting you.

As your Son stood condemned without defense,
teach us to follow you
where faith requires surrender;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passages

Read Slowly

Genesis 12:1–9

Hebrews 11:8–10

Pause after verse 1 and verse 4

The Pattern

God initiates displacement to accomplish divine purposes

Abram's migration is not the result of failure or punishment. It is vocation. God moves Abram in order to bless the world.

- God disrupts stability
- Faith is expressed through movement
- Blessing flows through vulnerability

God does not promise safety. God promises presence.

Theological Reflection

Abram becomes righteous not by possessing land, but by becoming a guest. He lives by hospitality — sometimes receiving it, sometimes denied it. The promise of God does not wait for arrival; it accompanies him in displacement.

This confronts a modern assumption: that faithfulness is demonstrated through stability, ownership, and control. Scripture offers a different vision. The people of God are those who live as pilgrims, dependent on God and one another.

Refugees today unsettle us not merely because of politics or economics, but because they expose the fragility we work hard to deny. They remind us that life is sustained not by borders, but by mercy.

To welcome them is to relearn what faith looks like.

Where Jesus Walks

Jesus is condemned not because He is guilty, but because He obeys. God's will leads Him into exposure.

So too with Abram.

Contemporary Reflection

When displaced people arrive among us, we often frame the moment as crisis. Scripture suggests another possibility: God may be moving history forward through those who arrive without security.

The question is not whether they belong here.

The question before us is whether we remember that God moves the families of the earth as part of His saving work.

Albert Einstein (Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany)

Einstein did not flee because of personal failure, but because of forces beyond his control. His displacement was not the end of his vocation; it became the condition through which his gifts reached the world.

How displacement shaped him

Forced to leave Germany in 1933, Einstein lost homeland, professional security, and cultural identity. He lived the rest of his life as a guest in other nations, deeply aware of the fragility of belonging.

Contribution

- Revolutionized modern physics
- Advocated for peace, human dignity, and the responsibility of nations toward refugees.
- Helped establish institutions that welcomed displaced scholars

Like Abraham, Einstein carried his vocation with him. Blessing flowed not from rootedness, but from trust and movement.

Conversation

1. What fears surface when you imagine leaving everything familiar?
 2. Where do we equate faithfulness with stability?
 3. How might refugees reveal forgotten aspects of discipleship?
 4. What would it mean for this parish to live more visibly as pilgrims?
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Embodied Response

- Gateway of Grace: Volunteer in a role that involves personal encounter.
 - Spiritual practice: Pray daily, *“Lord, teach me to live as a guest in your world.”*
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Closing Prayer

God of the journey,
lead us where certainty gives way to trust,
that your blessing may reach the nations
through lives surrendered to you.
Amen.



WEEK 2

HAGAR: THE GOD WHO SEES

Hagar's displacement is not holy or noble. It is unjust.

She is enslaved. Used to secure another's future. Then discarded when her presence becomes inconvenient. Her suffering is the direct result of fear and the protection of privilege within the household of Abraham.

Genesis refuses to hide this sin.

When Hagar is sent away, Scripture slows down. God interrupts the forward movement of salvation history to attend to the one who has been cast out.

Opening Prayer

God who sees what others overlook,
open our eyes to those made invisible.
Where fear drives exclusion,
teach us to choose compassion,
as Christ bore rejection for our sake. Amen.

Scripture Passages

Read Slowly

Genesis 16:6–13

Genesis 21:14–19

Matthew 8:20

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-
-

The Pattern

Human sin creates displacement, and God meets the cast out

Hagar is displaced because others prioritize security over mercy.

- Sin creates victims
- The vulnerable are made expendable
- God meets them in the wilderness

God does not excuse the sin. God does not abandon the victim.

Theological Reflection

Hagar is the first person in Scripture to name God: *“You are the God who sees me”* (Genesis 16:13).

To be seen by God is to be restored to personhood.

Jesus taking up the Cross reveals the same truth. God does not rescue from afar. God identifies with the rejected. The Cross is where divine love becomes visible — not by power, but by solidarity.

When refugees are reduced to numbers, debates, or burdens, the Church is called to remember Hagar’s God: the One who sees.

Contemporary Reflection

Many refugees today are displaced not by accident, but by systems that protect some at the expense of others. When we choose comfort over compassion, we repeat the sin that cast Hagar out.

God's presence among the displaced is also God's judgment on indifference.

Zainab Salbi (Iraqi refugee)

Why she fits this week

Salbi's displacement came through war, political violence, and human cruelty. She did not choose exile; it was imposed.

How displacement shaped her

Fleeing Iraq during the Gulf War, she experienced invisibility and loss. Her early years in exile were marked by trauma and instability.

Contribution

- Founded an international organization supporting women in war zones
- Gave voice to those silenced by conflict
- Reframed survivors not as victims but as bearers of strength

Like Hagar, Salbi's story reveals a God who sees those pushed out by fear and violence—and restores their voice and dignity.

Conversation

1. Who is invisible in our community?
 2. How do we react to suffering that disrupts order?
 3. What would it mean to truly see refugees as persons?
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Embodied Response

- Gateway of Grace: Volunteer in childcare or family accompaniment.
 - Practice listening without fixing.
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Closing Prayer

God who sees the unseen,
make us attentive to your presence
where the world looks away.
Amen.

WEEK 3

JOSEPH: REDEMPTION THROUGH TIME

Joseph's story (Genesis 37–50) is the longest continuous narrative in Genesis, and it is intentionally slow. Scripture refuses to rush toward resolution. Joseph's life unfolds over decades, not moments, and most of that time is spent in displacement.

Joseph is a teenager when he is first displaced—betrayed by his brothers, stripped of his robe, and sold into slavery (Genesis 37:23–28). He is carried into Egypt not because of war or famine, but because of familial sin: jealousy, fear, and the desire to preserve power. The text is clear that Joseph does not choose this fate.

In Egypt, Joseph's life appears to stabilize. He gains responsibility in Potiphar's household (Genesis 39:2–6). But this fragile security is shattered when he is falsely accused and imprisoned (Genesis 39:19–20). Again, displacement follows displacement.

Scripture emphasizes that God is with Joseph (Genesis 39:2, 21), but God does not rescue him quickly. Joseph remains imprisoned for years. His suffering is not explained. His prayers are not recorded. There is no divine speech offering reassurance or meaning.

This long silence is not incidental. It is the theological heart of the story.



Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

O God who remains present in hidden places,
who does not abandon your servants in silence,
teach us to trust you
when suffering stretches beyond our understanding.
As your Son fell under the weight of the Cross,
grant us patience to remain faithful
in the long work of redemption;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passages

Scripture (Read Slowly)

- Genesis 37:23–28 — Joseph is sold
- Genesis 39:2–4, 21 — “The Lord was with Joseph”
- Genesis 40:14–15, 23 — Forgotten in prison
- Genesis 45:4–8 — Recognition and reconciliation
- Allow silence after each reading.

The Pattern

God redeems prolonged displacement through faithful presence over time

Joseph's suffering is not momentary. It unfolds across betrayal, enslavement, false accusation, imprisonment, and years of waiting. God does not interrupt the process to make it bearable.

Instead, Scripture shows a different pattern:

- Human sin initiates displacement (Genesis 37:18–28)
- God remains present but hidden (Genesis 39:21)
- Redemption emerges slowly, through time and memory
- Suffering becomes life-giving without being erased

Joseph does not say, “This was not painful.” He says, “*God sent me before you to preserve life*” (Genesis 45:5). Notice the careful language: God does not cause the betrayal, but God enters it.

Theological Reflection

Joseph's story teaches us that salvation does not operate on human timelines.

The phrase “*The Lord was with Joseph*” appears repeatedly (Genesis 39:2, 21), yet Joseph remains imprisoned. God's presence does not eliminate suffering; it sanctifies endurance.

Joseph's faithfulness takes the form of remaining human in inhuman circumstances — continuing to interpret dreams, to care for others, to remember his own story when others forget him. Even when he asks the cupbearer to remember him, he is forgotten (Genesis 40:23). Scripture lingers here intentionally.

When Joseph finally interprets his life theologically, it is not with triumph but humility:

“*Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves... God sent me before you to preserve life*” (Genesis 45:5).

This is not denial. It is transfiguration.

Joseph does not reclaim his stolen years. He allows them to become life-giving for others. Redemption does not undo suffering; it gives it meaning through communion with others.

Jesus falls under the weight of the Cross.

This fall is not a mistake. It reveals the shape of salvation. God does not save by bypassing weakness, but by entering it fully.

Joseph's long imprisonment mirrors Christ's fall— the revelation that God's power is not displayed through escape, but through faithfulness within limitation.

Contemporary Reflection: Refugees and Time

Many refugees today do not live in crisis alone, but in extended waiting:

- Years in camps
- Years of legal uncertainty
- Years of fragmented family life
- Years of delayed hope

We often want stories of rescue and success. Joseph gives us something harder: a theology of waiting.

When the Church grows impatient, demands progress, or expects gratitude, we misunderstand the way God works. God asks us to remain— to accompany people whose stories may not resolve within our lifetime.

Madeleine Albright (Czech refugee)

Why she fits this week

Albright's displacement was prolonged and layered: fleeing Nazis, then Communism, growing up with loss and silence about trauma.

How displacement shaped her

Her family's refugee experience unfolded over decades. Much of its meaning only became clear later in life, when she learned of relatives lost in the Holocaust.

Contribution

- First woman U.S. Secretary of State
- Advocate for diplomacy, memory, and international responsibility
- Lived testimony to resilience formed over time

Connection to Joseph

Like Joseph, her story shows that meaning is not immediate. Redemption often emerges only after years of waiting and endurance.

Conversation

1. What do you notice about the amount of time Joseph spends waiting?
 2. How does Scripture describe God's presence during that time?
 3. Where are we uncomfortable with unresolved suffering?
 4. How might God be calling us to faithful presence rather than quick solutions?
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Embodied Response

- Gateway of Grace: Volunteer in roles that require consistency over time (employment mentoring, family accompaniment).
 - Spiritual practice: Choose one refugee family or ministry to hold in prayer throughout the remainder of Lent — without asking for updates or outcomes.
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Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

God of hidden faithfulness,
who remained with Joseph in prison
and with your Son beneath the Cross,
teach us patience shaped by love.

Make us companions in waiting,
that your redemption may unfold in your time;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

WEEK 4

MOSES: A LIFE BETWEEN WORLDS

Introduction & Biblical Context

Moses' life is shaped by displacement long before God speaks to him from the burning bush. Born under threat of death, he is saved through an act of quiet resistance and raised within a culture that is not his own (Exodus 2:1–10). He grows up with privilege, education, and access to power, yet his identity remains divided. He belongs neither fully to the Hebrew slaves nor fully to the Egyptian court. This in-between existence is not incidental; it forms Moses' capacity to recognize suffering and injustice when he encounters it.

When Moses intervenes in violence and is forced to flee into Midian (Exodus 2:11–15), his life enters a long season of obscurity. The years in exile are marked not by achievement but by tending sheep in the wilderness. It is only after this slow unmaking of certainty that God speaks. At the burning bush, God reveals a central truth of Scripture: liberation begins with attention. *"I have observed the misery of my people... I have heard their cry"* (Exodus 3:7). Moses is called not because he is powerful, but because he has learned to listen. His displacement becomes the very ground on which God entrusts him with the work of liberation.



Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

God who hears the cry of the oppressed,
quiet our hearts that we may listen.
As you called Moses from exile,
call us to attend to suffering without fear,
that we may walk with those who bear its weight;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Scripture Passages

Scripture (Read Slowly)

Exodus 2:1–10

Exodus 2:11–15

Exodus 3:1–10

Hebrews 11:23–27

- Allow silence after each reading.

The Pattern

God forms liberators through lives shaped by displacement

Those who live between worlds learn to hear suffering.

Liberation begins not with control, but with listening to those who suffer.

Theological Reflection

Moses does not save Israel by mastery. He saves by attention. He hears the cry of the oppressed (Exodus 3:7) and allows it to unsettle him.

Refugees are not merely recipients of aid. They are bearers of wisdom. When the Church refuses to listen, it silences God's chosen messengers.

In the Church's meditation on Jesus' journey to the Cross, Mary's faithful presence alongside her son reveals a profound truth: suffering is not overcome by distance or control but is sustained and transformed through shared love and presence.

Like Moses before the burning bush, and like Mary walking with Jesus on the way of the Cross, the Church is called first to attention. Liberation begins when we allow the suffering of others to unsettle us, to interrupt our assumptions, and to draw us into communion. In listening deeply to the stories and wisdom of refugees, we do not simply offer help; we learn how God is forming us — and the world — through shared vulnerability, faithful presence, and love that refuses to turn away.

Contemporary Reflection

In our own time, we often assume that solutions to suffering come from expertise, authority, or control. We look for leaders who can manage complexity, fix problems quickly, and restore order. Yet the biblical witness offers a different pattern. God forms liberators not through dominance, but through lives shaped by displacement — lives that have learned to listen because they have known vulnerability.

This pattern challenges the Church today. Refugees and displaced people are often approached as problems to be solved or needs to be met. Scripture calls us to something deeper. Those who live between worlds frequently see what others cannot: the fractures in our systems, the cost of indifference, the places where human dignity is most fragile. When the Church fails to listen to those shaped by displacement, it does more than miss an opportunity for service — it risks silencing voices through which God is still speaking.

Malala Yousafzai (Pakistani refugee)

Why she fits this week

Malala's identity was shaped by violence, exile, and living between worlds. Her displacement sharpened her ability to hear the cries of others. Malala Yousafzai's life embodies this truth. Forced into exile after surviving targeted violence, she became someone who lived between worlds: between homeland and host country, between childhood and public witness, between silence imposed by fear and speech shaped by courage. Her displacement did not diminish her voice; it refined it. Having known what it means to be silenced, she learned to hear the cries of others. Her advocacy grew not from abstract ideals, but from attentive listening to the suffering of girls denied education and dignity.

How displacement shaped her

After surviving an assassination attempt, she was forced to leave Pakistan. Exile expanded her voice rather than silencing it.

Contribution

- Global advocate for education
- Nobel Peace Prize laureate
- Gave voice to millions of girls denied opportunity

Like Moses, Malala's displacement formed her vocation. Liberation began not with power, but with listening and courage.

Conversation

1. Moses grows up belonging fully to neither the Hebrew slaves nor the Egyptian court. Where do you see “in-between” identities today, especially among immigrants or refugees?
 2. Moses’ years in exile are long and quiet. Why do you think God speaks to Moses *after* this time of displacement rather than before it?
 3. God begins by saying, “I have heard the cry of my people.” What does this suggest about the importance of listening before acting?
 4. Moses leaves behind access to power and security. How does this challenge our assumptions about privilege, safety, and faithfulness?
 5. God speaks to Moses from the wilderness rather than the palace. Where might God be speaking today from places we tend to overlook?
 6. How have experiences of uncertainty or loss shaped your capacity for compassion?
 7. As a community, how might we practice deeper listening to those whose lives are shaped by displacement before deciding how to respond?
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Embodied Response

- Gateway of Grace: Language tutoring or cultural accompaniment.
- Practice silence and listening.
- _____

Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

God who hears the cry of the oppressed,
teach us to listen before we act.

Amen.

WEEK 5

RUTH: CHOSEN SOLIDARITY

Introduction & Biblical Context

The Book of Ruth unfolds “in the days when the judges ruled” (Ruth 1:1), a time remembered in Scripture for its instability, violence, and moral fragmentation. It is an era when “everyone did what was right in their own eyes,” and the social fabric of Israel was frayed by cycles of fear, scarcity, and survival. Against this backdrop, famine drives Naomi and her family to Moab — a land historically associated with hostility and religious difference. In Moab, Naomi’s life unravels further: her husband dies, her sons die, and with them disappear her security, her lineage, and her future. When she returns to Bethlehem, she does so not as one restored, but as one emptied, renamed by grief, carrying no promise forward except survival itself.

Ruth’s decision to accompany Naomi is therefore nothing short of astonishing. As a Moabite woman, Ruth belongs to a people regarded with suspicion and contempt, often excluded from Israel’s communal life. She has every rational reason to return to her own people, to seek protection, belonging, and the possibility of a future. Instead, she chooses fidelity over advantage and binds herself to Naomi’s suffering without guarantee of return. Her words — *“Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God”* (Ruth 1:16) — are not a declaration of optimism, but of self-giving commitment. This is not sentiment or romance; it is a radical act of self-emptying love, a willingness to step into vulnerability for the sake of another, trusting that God’s life-giving work can emerge from faithful presence alone.



Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

O God of steadfast love,
who binds lives together across boundaries,
teach us to choose faithfulness over comfort
and presence over distance.

As Simon shared the burden of your Son,
form in us a love that stays;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passages

Scripture (Read Slowly)

- Ruth 1:6–18
- Ruth 2:10–12
- Matthew 27:32
- Allow silence after each reading.

The Pattern

God brings life through chosen solidarity and faithful presence

Ruth's displacement is voluntary. She chooses vulnerability out of love.

- Love crosses borders
- Fidelity replaces self-interest
- God works through staying, not rescuing

Ruth does not solve Naomi's problems. She refuses to abandon her.

Theological Reflection

Ruth's solidarity is kenotic— a self-emptying that refuses advantage. She relinquishes homeland, kinship, and future security in order to remain with one who can offer nothing in return.

God responds not with spectacle, but with quiet blessing. Ruth's faithfulness becomes the ground through which life is restored, not only to Naomi, but to Israel itself.

Simon of Cyrene embodies the same mystery. He does not remove the Cross. He shares its weight. In doing so, he enters salvation history.

Solidarity with refugees is not an act of generosity from above. It is a mutual bearing of life's weight, where God's redemption quietly takes root.

Contemporary Reflection

We often want to help without staying. We prefer programs to presence.

Ruth teaches us that love becomes redemptive only when it refuses distance. Faithfulness over time — not heroism— is how God heals the world.

Dorothy Day (in solidarity with refugees and the displaced)

(Not herself a refugee, but chose proximity and solidarity)

Why she fits this week

Day chose to bind her life to the poor, immigrants, and displaced, refusing distance or safety.

How solidarity shaped her

She lived among those society discarded, practicing hospitality not as charity but as shared life.

Contribution

- Co-founded a movement of hospitality and radical welcome
- Modeled faithfulness through presence, not solutions

Like Ruth, Day chose vulnerability out of love, trusting that God works through staying.

Conversation

- What risks does Ruth take by staying?
 - Where do we avoid proximity to suffering?
 - What would chosen solidarity look like for our parish?
-

Embodied Response

- Gateway of Grace: Commit to a relational, long-term volunteer role.
 - Practice: Show up consistently, even when nothing seems to change
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Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

God of steadfast love,
teach us to remain where love calls us,
that your healing may unfold through faithful presence.

Amen.

WEEK 6

THE HOLY FAMILY: GOD BECOMES A REFUGEE

Introduction & Biblical Context

The Flight into Egypt (Matthew 2:13–15) is not symbolic or sentimental. It is political, dangerous, and desperate. Herod's violence is systematic and intentional, aimed at preserving power through terror. Children are targeted. Families are forced to flee under cover of night. Survival requires movement, secrecy, and dependence on the mercy of others. Scripture offers no reassurance that the journey will be safe — only the command to go.



God does not intervene with force. God does not overthrow Herod or halt the machinery of violence. God flees. This is the scandal of the Incarnation: God enters human history not protected, but exposed. The Word made flesh does not remain above suffering but enters fully into the vulnerability of human life. As a refugee child, Christ's life is sustained only through communion — through the courage of Mary and Joseph, through the hospitality of strangers, through a web of relationships that make survival possible. Salvation is revealed not as isolation or self-sufficiency, but as shared life.

In this moment, God sanctifies displacement from within. The Incarnation reveals that divine life is not preserved by distance from suffering but is made known through participation in it. God binds divine presence to human fragility, choosing to dwell where life is most precarious. The refugee Christ reveals that communion is not an abstract spiritual idea but a concrete, embodied reality: lives held together through mutual dependence, care, and co-suffering love. To encounter the displaced, then, is not merely to offer help from afar; it is to enter the space where God has chosen to be present, where salvation unfolds through relationship, vulnerability, and shared life.

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Christ who fled violence as a child,
who knew the fear of the night road,
strip away our illusions of distance from suffering,
that we may recognize you
in every displaced family;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passages

Scripture (Read Slowly)

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Matthew 2:13–15

-

Philippians 2:6–8

The Pattern

God enters displacement and sanctifies it from within

Here the pattern reaches its depth.

- God does not merely help the displaced
- God becomes one of them
- Salvation is revealed through self-emptying love

Theological Reflection

When Christ is stripped on the Cross, all illusion is removed. God stands fully exposed, sharing the vulnerability of those with no protection.

This reveals a profound truth: God has bound divine life to human fragility. The places we avoid — instability, displacement, insecurity — are the places God inhabits.

To reject refugees is not only a moral failure. It is a failure of recognition.

Hospitality becomes sacramental when we receive the One who has chosen to dwell among the vulnerable.

Contemporary Reflection

Refugees today do not arrive bearing answers. They arrive bearing risk — to our comfort, our certainty, our illusions of control.

God asks not whether we feel ready, but whether we will recognize Christ when He arrives in unfamiliar form.

Elie Wiesel (Holocaust survivor and refugee)

Why he fits this week

Wiesel's life testifies to God's presence amid radical vulnerability and loss.

How displacement shaped him

Survived camps, lost family, lived with permanent exile and memory.

Contribution

- Preserved witness to suffering without erasing its pain
- Advocated for remembrance, compassion, and moral responsibility

Wiesel's life reminds us that holiness does not bypass suffering. God dwells where life is most fragile.

Conversation

1. How does Jesus' refugee identity challenge our assumptions?
2. Where do we resist vulnerability?
3. What comforts might God be asking us to relinquish?

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Embodied Response

- Gateway of Grace: Assist with emergency or material support.
- Spiritual practice: Fast from one comfort this week as prayer.

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Closing Prayer

Christ who chose vulnerability,
teach us to meet you
where life is most fragile.
Amen.

WEEK 7

THE APOSTLES: A PILGRIM CHURCH

Introduction & Biblical Context

After the Resurrection, the disciples do not settle into security or permanence. They are sent. The risen Christ does not gather them into a protected center but disperses them outward, across borders and into unfamiliar places. The Church is born not in stability, territory, or institutional control, but in movement. From the beginning, Christian life is marked by pilgrimage— a people on the way, sustained not by possession but by trust. The apostles become migrants themselves, dependent on hospitality, vulnerable to rejection, and shaped by encounters rather than dominance.

This outward movement is not merely geographic; it is relational. As the apostles travel, they form communities through shared life — praying together, breaking bread together, bearing one another’s burdens. Their witness is not secured by power or prestige, but by presence. They arrive as guests before they are recognized as teachers. They receive before they give. In this way, the Church learns that communion is not something it owns or distributes at will; it is something that emerges wherever lives are joined in Christ.

Christ is encountered not through control, but on the road. On the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ walks unrecognized among strangers, revealing himself only in the breaking of the bread. This pattern endures. The Church continues to meet Christ in those it did not expect, in conversations it did not plan, in relationships formed along the way. To follow the risen Lord, then, is to accept a life shaped by movement, attentiveness, and shared journey — trusting that Christ goes ahead of us, waiting to be recognized in the stranger who walks beside us.



Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Risen Christ,
who meets us on the road
and makes yourself known in broken bread,
send us forth as a pilgrim people,
that we may recognize you
in every stranger we meet;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Passages

Scripture (Read Slowly)

- Luke 24:13–35
- 1 Peter 2:11–12
- Matthew 28:19–20
- Allow silence after each reading.

The Pattern

God forms a pilgrim people who encounter Christ in strangers

- The Church lives by movement, not possession
- Christ is revealed in hospitality
- Communion replaces territory

Theological Reflection

The tomb is silence. Waiting. Trust.

The Way of the Cross does not end in closure, but in transformation. Resurrection does not erase suffering; it transfigures it into communion.

The Church does not “serve” refugees as outsiders. We recognize them as the place where Christ waits to meet us.

Contemporary Reflection

The question at the end of Lent is not whether refugees belong in the Church.

The question is whether the Church still remembers who it is.

Pope Francis (child of immigrants)

Why he fits this week

His ministry emphasizes the Church as a pilgrim people, encountering Christ in the stranger.

How displacement shaped this vision

Formed by immigrant stories, he consistently frames the Church as “going out,” not settling in comfort.

Contribution

- Global call to hospitality and encounter
- Re-centered Christian identity on movement, mercy, and communion

Like the early Church, this vision insists that Christ is found not in possession, but on the road.

Conversation

- What patterns of God's work have we seen across these stories?
 - How has our understanding of refugees changed?
 - What commitments is God asking of us now?
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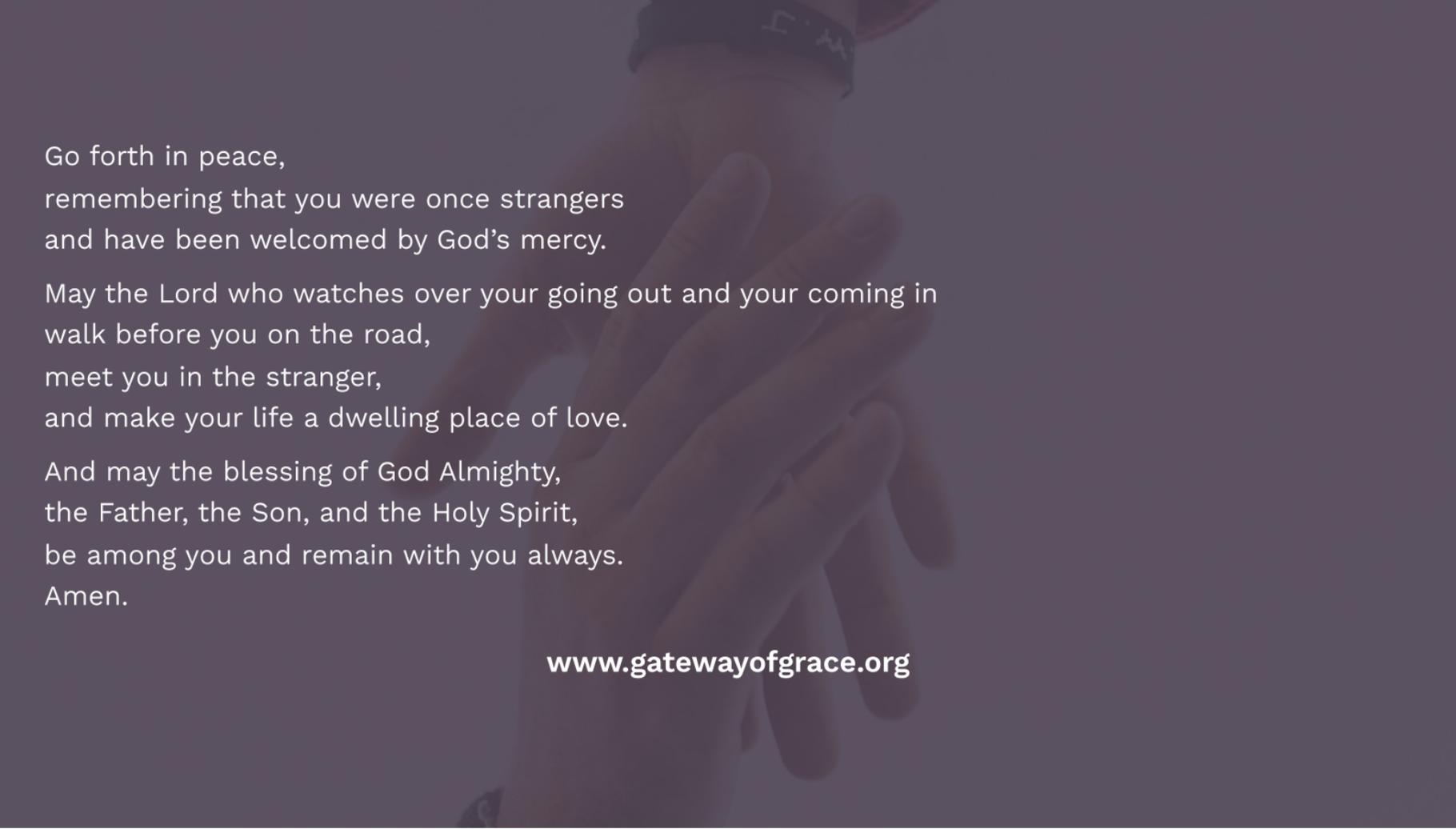
Embodied Response

- Commit as a parish to ongoing partnership with Gateway of Grace
 - Discern concrete next steps for sustained engagement
 - _____
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Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

God of the Resurrection,
send us forth as bearers of your life,
that in welcoming the stranger
we may welcome Christ himself.
Amen.



Go forth in peace,
remembering that you were once strangers
and have been welcomed by God's mercy.

May the Lord who watches over your going out and your coming in
walk before you on the road,
meet you in the stranger,
and make your life a dwelling place of love.

And may the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

www.gatewayofgrace.org