



Creating a Culture of Encounter

National Migration Week

January 8-14, 2017

For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week, which is an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking. The theme for National Migration Week 2017 draws attention to Pope Francis' call to create a culture of encounter, and in doing so to look beyond our own needs and wants to those of others around us. In the homily given at his first Pentecost as pope, he emphasized the importance of encounter in the Christian faith: "For me this word is very important. Encounter with others. Why? Because faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others."

With respect to migrants, too often in our contemporary culture we fail to encounter them as persons, and instead look at them as others or render them invisible. We do not take the time to engage migrants in a meaningful way, as fellow children of God, but remain aloof to their presence and suspicious of their intentions. During this National Migration Week, let us all take the opportunity to engage migrants as community members and neighbors – all of whom are worthy of our attention and support. ✠

A Prayer for Migrant Families

Good and gracious God,
we thank you for the gift of families.

We are grateful for all of the joy and love that they
bring into our lives,
and we ask that you provide special protection for all
families,
particularly those who face hardships as they move in
search of a better life.

Show mercy to those who travel in danger,
and lead them to a place of safety and peace.

Comfort those who are alone and afraid because their
families have been torn apart by violence and injustice.

As we reflect upon the difficult journey that the Holy
Family faced as refugees in Egypt,
help us to remember the suffering of all migrant
families.

Through the intercession of Mary our Mother,
and St. Joseph the Worker, her spouse,
we pray that all migrants may be reunited with their
loved ones and find the meaningful work they seek.

Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality for
all who come in search of refuge.

Give us the courage to welcome every stranger as
Christ in our midst.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever. Amen.

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To learn more or to get involved, visit the following pages:
USCCB Justice for Immigrants: www.justiceforimmigrants.org
Catholic Relief Services: www.crs.org

Migration Facts

Immigration Reform

Position: The Catholic Bishops and the Church support humane immigration reform. We must reform our broken system that separates families and impedes 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) Y2015: 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 FY2015 the Department of Homeland Security detained 406,595 immigrants compared to 486,651 in FY2014; it is required that 34,000 beds are available each day. (Department of Homeland Security)
- Alternatives to detention programs can cost as low as \$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 objects 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).

*Source: USCCB National Migration Week Toolkit 2017. Learn more at www.justiceforimmigrants.org.
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