

Human Dignity and Solidarity—Pastoral Migratoria Nacional

PRAYER RESOURCES

National Migration Week/World Day of Migrants
and Refugees 2024



Theme of Pope Francis' message 2024: “God walks with his people.”

September 29, 2024

PRAYER FROM POPE FRANCIS

God, Almighty Father,
we are your pilgrim Church
journeying towards the Kingdom of heaven.
We live in our homeland,
but as if we were foreigners.
Every foreign place is our home,
yet every native land is foreign to us.
Though we live on earth,
our true citizenship is in heaven.
Do not let us become possessive
of the portion of the world
you have given us as a temporary home.
Help us to keep walking,
together with our migrant brothers and sisters,
toward the eternal dwelling you have prepared for us.
Open our eyes and our hearts
so that every encounter with those in need
becomes an encounter with Jesus, your Son and our Lord.
Amen.

ABOUT POPE FRANCIS' MESSAGE

“God walks with His people,” is the title chosen by Pope Francis for his message for the upcoming World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), which will be celebrated on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

In this message, the Holy Father reminds us that all of us, God’s people, are migrants on this earth, on our way to the “true homeland,” the Kingdom of Heaven. Migrants are a contemporary icon of this people on a journey, of the Church on a journey, and at the same time, it is in them and in all our vulnerable brothers and sisters that we can encounter the Lord who walks with us.

For this reason, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (DPIHD) is promoting a communication campaign in preparation for the WDMR2024 in which it invites all people of goodwill to organize initiatives with migrants, refugees, and vulnerable people.

Please take an opportunity to read the **Holy Father’s message** in its entirety and explore all of the Vatican sponsored resources at **their website**.

HOMILY NOTES

Part I

Readings for September 29, 2024

Reading 1: **Numbers 11:25-29**

Reading 2: **James 5:1-6**

Gospel: **Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48**

Key points to consider for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees:

1. Emphasize the right to migrate for individuals who are stuck in situations of peril and whose lives are at risk due to state sanctioned persecution and other forms of violence. Reinforce the inherent value of every person regardless of where they are born.
2. Highlight the importance of welcoming the stranger and of providing hospitality to migrants throughout their migration experience (Leviticus 19:34). The idea of “welcoming the stranger” is often associated with migrants who need help and support and is tied to the corporal works of mercy. It reminds us that Jesus will reward those who cared for Him in His time of need; “For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited me in” (Matthew 25:35).
3. Pope Francis invites us to embrace humility and hospitality. To remember that we do not belong to this earth but that “our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20). **In his 2024 World Day of Migrants message**, Pope Francis reminds us that in the poor we can recognize the face of God and that every “encounter along the way represents an opportunity to meet the Lord; it is an occasion charged with salvation, because Jesus is present in the sister or brother in need of our help.”
4. This celebration also provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the dangers that can come from great riches. We often pursue wealth for the benefits that it can bring in this life, but what risks do we as Catholics have to consider when it comes to our own wellbeing, our local communities, and that of the nation? The second reading warns us of the dangers of overlooking and dismissing those around us in our pursuit of wealth and self-satisfaction. This could include impoverished and persecuted migrants, the poor, and other vulnerable populations who we often overlook.
5. Invite the audience to examine where barriers and groups within their own lives exist. Use the Gospel text to suggest the existence of artificially established groupings and barriers that keep us from authentically encountering one another as persons made in the image of God.

HOMILY NOTES

Part II

Awakened in the dark of night, Jose's mother told him to leave and head north to stay with his aunt who lived thousands of miles away in another country. It was not that she wanted him to go—her heart shattered with the very prospect of his departure—but ongoing threats from gangs and drug cartels in the neighborhood where they lived anticipated his death if he stayed. She would join him soon, she promised, for remaining might guarantee her the same fate if they found that she had sent him away.

Such stories could be multiplied almost endlessly and told with any number of variations with respect to their details. People like Jose come to this country as a stranger, often with no family ties, no friends, and just with the hope that they might find a place of safety. I begin this homily in celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees to remind us that there are strangers among us, strangers who share in both humanity and a call to care for one another. This Vatican sponsored event, celebrated annually for more than a century, does not teach us to only care for the poor and marginalized living in our parish community, but also to show hospitality for those who cross international borders and find themselves living in our communities.

The theme of accompaniment, which urges us to provide humanitarian and spiritual support to migrants throughout their journey, and which is connected to the idea of hospitality, is emphasized in Pope Francis' **migration day message**. Here he notes that "God not only walks with his people, but also within them, in the sense that he identifies himself with men and women on their journey through history, particularly with the least, the poor and the marginalized. In this we see an extension of the mystery of the Incarnation." As followers of Christ, we have a **special obligation** to care for the poor: "In this sense, the poor save us, because they enable us to encounter the face of the Lord." Christ himself was once a migrant fleeing to Egypt; Pope Francis stresses that he also is a migrant right now walking amongst his people.

Today's **second reading** reminds us that all things of the earth shall pass away and our effort to stockpile riches is all for naught. Those who have lived pleasurably and ignored the suffering of the poor or who have cheated those who work for them have had their hearts fattened and like sheep to the slaughter shall be condemned.

This passage calls to mind is the story a rich young man who has kept all the commandments and yet, still, asks Jesus "What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me. When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth" (Matthew 20:22). The young man's sadness reminds us of the true cost of discipleship, the relinquishment of material wealth in faith of the riches of heaven. We are reminded that true wealth lies not in earthly possessions but in the love and compassion that we show to others.

Pope Francis emphasizes a call to action. To welcome, promote, and integrate those who are most vulnerable. It is a given that each of us is obligated to care and provide for our family, but our line of sight must also consider the needs and suffering of strangers, of outcasts, and those who do not seem to "belong" in our communities and neighborhoods. If we do not care for one another—the migrant, the refugee, the stranger sitting next to you in the Church pew—then at the end of our life when everything returns to dust and ash, standing face to face with God, what will we have to show for it?

In the **Gospel reading**, the disciples come to Jesus telling him they tried to stop someone casting out demons in Jesus' name because he was not one of them. Jesus responds "do not prevent him... There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us." In his response, Jesus points to the importance of transcending boundaries that are often imposed by a pre-defined group, and implicitly calling on us to break down the artificial constructed barriers that separate us. For Jesus did not die for only our sins, or the sins of a small group of followers, but for the sins of the world. We often appear as the Pharisees, refusing to associate with the "others" (could be an example of the Samaritan woman). But what we must remind ourselves is that Jesus has called all. Not just the Jewish people, but sinners. We are no more worthy to be saved than any other person. In our daily lives, as we engage disparate communities and strangers even within our own, we should recognize that we are all sacred and should treat each other as such.

SUGGESTED INTERCESSIONS FOR THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Please choose some of the following to be included among the intercessions in your parish on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees or at any point that you deem appropriate during the Liturgical year.

On Slavery

For Pope Francis, that our Heavenly Father may gift him with deep wisdom as he calls the Church to struggle against the evil of human trafficking, we pray to the Lord.

For all bishops in the Church, that they continue to be leaders in the fight against modern day slavery, both domestically and abroad, we pray to the Lord.

For our priests and deacons, that they may boldly proclaim Church teaching on human dignity and the Church's teaching on human trafficking, we pray to the Lord.

For our religious brother and sisters and all the lay faithful, that God inspire them with the continued commitment to fight the evil of human trafficking, we pray to the Lord.

For everyone who is trapped in a situation of slavery, that God will help to liberate them from their chains, we pray to the Lord.

For perpetrators of slavery, that they repent of their evil ways and turn to God for forgiveness, we pray to the Lord.

On Migrants

For all bishops in our Church, that they may be encouraged by our prayers and support to lead God's people in building a culture that respects the human dignity of all migrants, we pray to the Lord.

For all Catholics, that God inspire them to take action in their local communities to support and protect migrants and to advocate on their behalf, we pray to the Lord.

For unaccompanied migrant children, that God protect them on their journey and safely reunite them with their families, we pray to the Lord.

For our neighbors, coworkers, friends, fellow Christians, and all people, that they may grow in their awareness of the issue of migration and become a voice in the public square calling for greater protections for these populations, we pray to the Lord.

For migrant workers, that they may labor in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide, we pray to the Lord.

For migrants, refugees, and all other strangers in our midst, that they may find strength in our concern for justice and feel the warmth of our love, we pray to the Lord.

On Refugees

For the bishops, that they will continue in their commitment to refugee resettlement and provide in their communities a place of welcome, we pray to the Lord.

For all refugees who are forced to flee from their homes, that God bring peace to them and their country of origin, we pray to the Lord.

For refugees in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere who are experiencing great suffering, that God might bring them to a place of peace and safety, we pray to the Lord.

For refugee children, who have been separated from their family due to circumstance or death, that God will provide his protection, we pray to the Lord.

For an end to all strife and persecution that gives rise to refugee crises, we pray to the Lord.

Government Officials

For the President of the United States and all government leaders: that they continue to work tirelessly to end the bane of slavery that continues to exist in our communities, we pray to the Lord.

For the President of the United States and all government leaders: that the Son of God, who became human, will help them understand the great dignity of human persons, and support legislation that better protects vulnerable populations in our midst, we pray to the Lord.

For policy makers in our nation, that God grant them the wisdom to enact laws that provide greater protection for all migrant populations, we pray to the Lord.

For policy makers in our nation, that they will provide the support to migrant populations who yearn for a new beginning, we pray to the Lord.