

SAMPLE PRAYER SERVICE: IMMIGRATION/MIGRATION

Introduction

We gather to remind ourselves of the Gospel's call to welcome the stranger by ministering to immigrants and serving the most vulnerable of God's people. We join in solidarity with the strangers in our community, and all those who call upon government officials for a fair and compassionate immigration policy, that addresses the root causes of migration and poverty.

Opening Hymn

Opening Prayer

Our God, you have given us in your word the stories of persons who needed to leave their homelands— Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, Moses. You have chosen that the life of Jesus be filled with events of unplanned travel and flight from enemies. You have shown us through the modeling of Jesus how we are called to relate to persons from different nations and cultures. You have called us to be teachers of your word. We ask you, our God, to open our minds and hearts to the challenge and invitation to model your perfect example of love. Amen. "An Alien's Prayer" by Edward Hays is reprinted with permission

First Reading: Leviticus 19: 33-34

When aliens settle with you in your land, you shall not oppress them. They shall be treated as native-born among you, and you shall love them as people like yourselves, because you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Second Reading: *A Place at the Table: A Pastoral Reflection of the U.S. Catholic Bishops (2002)*

Catholic teaching affirms that all persons, even those on the margins of society, have basic human rights: the right to life and to those things that are necessary to the proper development of life, including faith and family, work and education, housing and health care...Our Church's commitment to find a place at the table for all God's children is expressed in every part of our country and in the poorest places on earth.

Third Reading:

Catholic concern for migrants and refugees has a strong foundation in Scripture. The Old and New Testaments poignantly depict Moses and the Jewish people in exile and the Holy Family as refugees. The obstacles to a hearty welcome (fear of the stranger, prejudice, competition, sense of loss) also find counterparts in the parables of Jesus and in His capacity to break through the taboos and restrictions of his contemporaries, especially in regard to tax collectors, sinner, Samaritans, and Gentiles. These scriptural teachings call us to a deeper compassion for the plight of the migrant. Inspired by this calling of our faith, the Church has developed a rich body of teaching and a heritage of concern for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. The faithful in the United States – a land so blessed and whose tradition is steeped in the immigrant experience – have special responsibility to be a welcoming people. In the pastoral letter, *Strangers no Longer: A Journey of Hope*, the bishops remind us that as Catholics, we have an obligation to uphold this tradition of our faith.

Time for Quiet Reflection

Music is appropriate, either instrumental or vocal.

The Gospel: Matthew 25: 34-40

For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me... The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it for me.

Intercessions

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

For an end to the violence and poverty that displaces so many people from their homes and homelands, we pray to the Lord.

For migrant workers, that they may labor and live in safe and just conditions, we pray to the Lord.

For the families and children of migrant workers, that they be reunited, we pray to the Lord.

For an end to human trafficking, that the dignity of all God's children will be acknowledged and protected, we pray to the Lord.

For our law-makers, that they establish and enforce laws that protect the rights and dignity of everyone, especially those most vulnerable in our country, we pray to the Lord.

For employers and corporations, that they choose the dignity and worth of each human person over profit and power, we pray to the Lord.

For our parish community, that we may continue to serve those without homes and resources, and that we speak out for just immigration reform, we pray to the Lord.

Personal Testimony

Spoken aloud together:

We choose to stand with and assist those who are forced to move from their homelands and seek economic and physical survival elsewhere. Our commitment to a merciful way of life demands that we meet, by direct service and systemic change, the needs of those who suffer. We seek to educate ourselves and others to the underlying causes of migration. We will continue to welcome and assist those who seek hope, home and labor in this country and this community. We welcome the invitation to be true to the call of the gospel. **Amen**

Closing Prayer

Response (all): *We welcome you, Jesus*

Dear Jesus, you came into this world as a migrant **R.**

There was no room for your family at the inn **R.**

Along with the angels in heaven **R.**

Along with the shepherds who wandered the hills **R.**
Along with the Magi who traveled from the East **R.**

Your family became refugees fleeing Herod **R.**
In Egypt you were an alien **R.**
In your public life you did not have a place to rest **R.**

Dear Jesus, we see you today, and **R.**
In refugees fleeing war and violence **R.**
In immigrants seeking a better life **R.**
In migrant workers who enrich our land with their labor **R.**
In seafarers and other people on the move **R.**

Let Us Pray: (together)

Dear Jesus, you are the refuge of people on the move. We ask you to grant immigrants, refugees, and other migrants peace, protection, and comfort. Help us to recognize that whenever we welcome the stranger in your name, we welcome you. Teach us to recognize your presence in every human being. Bring us together as one family, at the banquet table of your love, with you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. *Amen.*

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Closing Hymn

Catholic Relief Services

Sample Prayer Service for Immigrants from Latin America “We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino*”

CALL TO PRAYER:

Leader 1: God of movement, God of stillness, calm our hearts so we may recognize your presence with us now. *(Pause)* Help us to grow in prayerful solidarity with all those who immigrate to this country, to our community. We especially lift up our brothers and sisters from Latin America, and the significance they hold in our lives. *(Pause)* Help us to realize that, “We are together on the journey.” *Estamos juntos en el camino.*

All: We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino.*

GATHERING SONG SUGGESTIONS:

“One Spirit, One Church” by Kevin Keil

“Pan de Vida” by Bob Hurd

“Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo / We Are the Body of Christ” by Jaime Cortez

(From OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213, www.ocp.org)

Leader 1: Good and gracious God, the story of migration is long entwined in our collective history. Open our minds so we may listen anew to the ancient story of our Hebrew ancestors, as they journey out of Egypt.

SCRIPTURE:

Leader 2: A reading from the book of Exodus:

The Israelites set out from Rameses for Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, not counting the children. A crowd of mixed ancestry also went up with them, besides their livestock, very numerous flocks and herds.

Since the dough they had brought out of Egypt was not leavened, they baked it into unleavened loaves. They had been rushed out of Egypt and had no opportunity even to prepare food for the journey. The time the Israelites had stayed in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. At the end of four hundred and thirty years, all the hosts of the LORD left the land of Egypt on this very date. This was a night of vigil for the LORD, as he led them out of the land of Egypt; so on this same night all the Israelites must keep a vigil for the LORD throughout their generations.

(Exodus 12:37-42)

(Moment of silent reflection)

Leader 1:

The following principles on migration are taken from the “Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration” co-written by the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States.

Leader 2:

**“The Five Principals on Migration from Catholic Social Teaching
I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.**

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.”

All: We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino.*

Leader 2: In solidarity with those who have little opportunity at home, let us pray.

Leader 3:

“II. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.

The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.”

All: We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino*.

Leader 3: In solidarity with those who are denied the right to migrate, let us pray.

Leader 4:

“III. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.”

All: We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino*.

Leader 4: In solidarity with those communities who receive immigrants, let us pray.

Leader 5:

“IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.

Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.”

All: We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino*.

Leader 5: In solidarity with those who seek protection, let us pray.

Leader 6:

“V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.”

All: We are together on the journey, *Estamos juntos en el camino*.

Leader 6: In solidarity with those whose basic human rights are not respected, let us pray

(Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, November, 2002 (No's. 35-38)

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

CLOSING PRAYER:

Leader 1:

Together on the Journey A Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

Dear Jesus, our journey through life is long and hard. We cannot make this trip alone; we must walk together on the journey. You promised to send us a helper, your Spirit. Help us to see your Spirit in those you send to journey with us.

In the refugee family, seeking safety from violence,
Let us see your Spirit.

In the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables,
Let us see your Spirit.

In the asylum-seeker, seeking justice for himself and
his family, Let us see your Spirit.

In the unaccompanied child, traveling in a dangerous
world, Let us see your Spirit.

Teach us to recognize that as we walk with each other,
You are present. Teach us to welcome not only the
strangers in our midst but the gifts they bring as well:
the invitation to conversion, communion, and solidarity.

This is the help you have sent: we are not alone. We
are together on the journey, and for this we give you
thanks.

Amen.

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SENDING FORTH SONG SUGGESTIONS:

"E Na Lima Hana" by David Haas and Joe Camacho

"We Are Many Parts" by Marty Haugen

"Diverse in Culture, Race and Nation" by Ruth Duck

(From GIA Publications, 7404 South Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL 60638, www.giamusic.com)

Other resources are available at www.usccb.org/mrs/nmw/prayers/shtml

Juntos en el Camino

Oración para Migrantes y Refugiados

Querido Jesús, nuestro viaje por la vida es largo y duro. No podemos hacer este recorrido solos; debemos caminar juntos durante el viaje. Prometiste enviarnos un ayudante, tu Espíritu. Ayúdanos a ver tu Espíritu en los que envías a viajar con nosotros.

En la familia refugiada, que busca seguridad ante la violencia, Déjanos ver tu Espíritu.

En el trabajador migrante, que trae alimento a nuestras mesas, Déjanos ver tu Espíritu

En el solicitante de asilo, que busca justicia para sí y su familia, Déjanos ver tu Espíritu

En el niño sin compañía, que viaja solo en un mundo peligroso, Déjanos ver tu Espíritu

Enséñanos a reconocer que cuando caminamos juntos, Tú estás presente. Enséñanos a acoger no sólo al forastero entre nosotros sino también los dones que nos trae: las invitaciones a la conversión, la comunión y la solidaridad.

Pues esta es la ayuda que has enviado: no estamos solos. Estamos juntos en el camino, y por esto te damos las gracias.
Amén.