

## A Global Response to the Refugee Crisis

### CALL TO PRAYER

**Leader:** Today, we gather in memory of the Holy Family, for all those who have been forced to flee their homes in our troubled world. We pray for the more than 60 million people displaced worldwide—either as refugees, internally displaced persons, or asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup>

May we realize that, in our interconnected world, we are linked with all displaced persons by our common humanity.

May we proclaim our solidarity with our sisters and brothers as we recognize their human dignity as children of God.

May we follow St. Paul's admonition to "welcome one another as Christ welcomed you, for the Glory of God," and open our hearts to refugees around the global community.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, remember the men, women and children who long for home as they weep beside the rivers of exile. In your mercy, grant them new life. With your grace, help us to embody for them your concern and compassion.



### SCRIPTURE READINGS

**Reader 1:** As we listen to Psalm 137, let us be mindful of all refugees who find themselves in strange and unwelcoming lands. What must it be like to be forced into exile—to see others die along the side of the road or in the open sea? What must it be like to be refused sanctuary?

By the rivers of Babylon we sat mourning and weeping  
when we remembered Zion.  
On the poplars of that land we hung up our harps.  
There our captors asked us for the words of a song;  
Our tormentors, for a joyful song: "Sing for us a song of Zion!"  
But how could we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land?  
If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand wither.  
May my tongue stick to my palate if I do not remember you,  
If I do not exalt Jerusalem beyond all my delights.

*Pause for a moment of silence.*

**Reader 2:** Let us be mindful of the violence that refugees encounter and endure as we listen to St..Matthew's (2:13-22) description of the situation that caused the Holy Family to flee.

When the Magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son." When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the Magi.

Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more. When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."

*Pause for a moment of silence.*

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING REFLECTIONS

**Reader 3:** The continued effort to safeguard the human rights of all displaced people is based on a consistent ethic of life and with full implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us listen to Pope Francis's 2015 *Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees*.<sup>2</sup>

"...in an age of such vast movements of migration, large numbers of people are leaving their homelands, with a suitcase full of fears and desires, to undertake a hopeful and dangerous trip in search of more humane living conditions. Often, however, such migration gives rise to suspicion and hostility, even in ecclesial communities, prior to any knowledge of the migrants' lives or their stories of persecution and destitution. In such cases, suspicion and prejudice conflict with the biblical commandment of welcoming with respect and solidarity the stranger in need.

It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to guarantee the easing of conditions, often brought about by war or famine, which compel whole peoples to leave their native countries. Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress.



“...this crisis we face is not just a crisis of numbers,  
it is also a crisis of solidarity.  
Refugees have a right to asylum—not bias and barbed wire.”  
– Ban Ki-moon, U.N. Secretary-General

**Reader 3:** Our world today is facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on leaders across Europe and throughout the world to show greater solidarity as they strive to combat the deeper roots of conflict and continue to work towards securing human rights for all.

“Today, I ask that countries act with solidarity, in the name of our shared humanity, by pledging new and additional pathways for the admission of Syrian refugees. These pathways can include resettlement or humanitarian admission, family reunions, as well as labour or study opportunities. When managed properly, accepting refugees is a win for everyone. Refugees are famously devoted to education, improvement and self-reliance. They bring new skills and experience to an ageing workforce. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance around the world has doubled in just ten years. More people are displaced by conflict than at any time since 1945. People displaced within their countries because of conflict are now displaced for an average of 17 years. Millions of children are out of school, sometimes for years. And the situation is getting worse. Attempts to demonize them are not only offensive; they are factually incorrect. I call on leaders to counter fearmongering with reassurance, and to fight inaccurate information with the truth... The world must step up, with concrete actions and pledges. All countries can do more.”<sup>3</sup>

*Pause for a moment of silence.*

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Leader:** Pope Francis’s *Prayer to our Blessed Mother for Migrants*

Oh Mary, star of the sea, once again we recourse to thee, to find refuge and serenity, to implore your protection and help. Mother of God and our Mother, turn your sweet gaze towards those who face the dangers of the sea every day to guarantee their families the necessary sustenance for life, to protect the respect of creation, to serve peace between peoples.

Protector of migrants and itinerants, assist with maternal care all men, women, and children who are forced to flee their lands in search of a future and of hope. May their meeting with us and our people not become a source of new and heavier slavery and humiliation.

Mother of mercy, ask forgiveness for us who, blinded by selfishness, concerned by our own interests and prisoners of our own fears, have become distracted towards the needs and sufferings of our brothers.

Refuge of sinners, obtain the conversion of heart for those who generate war, hate, and poverty, who exploit their brothers and their fragility, who make an undignified commerce of human life. Model of charity, bless all men and women of good will, who receive and serve those who dock on this land: may the love received and given be a seed of new brotherly ties and the dawn of a world of peace. Amen.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 World’s refugees and displaced exceed record 60 million, <http://reut.rs/1NsBNea>.
- 2 Pope Francis’ Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2015, <http://bit.ly/1xo5uGY>.
- 3 UN Secretary-General’s remarks at Opening of High-level meeting on Global Responsibility Sharing for Syrian Refugees, <http://bit.ly/23KpPHC>.

