

Prayer Service for Children at the Border

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: We gather to reflect on the thousands of children coming to the U.S. border, to pray for them and to pray that our response to them is grounded in the teachings of our faith.

Reader 1: A reading from the book of Leviticus 19:34:

When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.

Reader 2: A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew:19:14

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Reader 3: A reading from the 2014 statement from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services:

The need to protect the vulnerable is an integral element of Catholic approach to service and pastoral care in the United States. . . . The 2003 pastoral statement on migration *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, specifically speaks of the unaccompanied child, noting this special population’s heightened vulnerability, and the corresponding need for special consideration and care that these children should receive.

Reader 4: We recall recent Papal teaching on immigrants and migrants:

Pope John Paul II defended immigration prompted by poverty: “Interdependence must be transformed into solidarity based upon the principle that the goods of creation are meant for all.” In his *Ecclesia in America*, John Paul II reaffirmed the rights of migrants and their families and the need for respecting human dignity, “even in cases of non-legal immigration.”

Pope Francis defended the rights of migrants early in his papacy, traveling to Lampedusa, Italy, to call for their protection. Pope Francis decried the “globalization of indifference” and the “throwaway culture” that lead to the disregard of those fleeing persecution or seeking a better life. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis speaks particularly of the importance of work with migrants and notes that it is essential for Catholics “to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability (including migrants and refugees) in which we are called to recognize the suffering of Christ...” (Testimony of Bishop Seitz of the Diocese of El Paso, Texas for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: On Unaccompanied Children: House Judiciary Committee, June 25, 2014, <http://bit.ly/1o3aNqn>.)



PRAYER SERVICE

Leader: Help us to listen and reflect deeply on the teachings of our faith as we pray for unaccompanied minors who are making a journey of hope:

Reader Five: For the children longing to reunite with their parents who have come to the U.S. to escape poverty,

All: Have mercy on them, Oh Lord.

Reader 6: For the children escaping abuse of caretakers,

All: Have mercy on them, Oh Lord.

Reader 7: For the young boys escaping recruitment into the violent gangs in Central America,

All: Have mercy on them, Oh Lord.

Reader 8: For the young girls escaping sexual violence from gang members and others,

All: Have mercy on them, Oh Lord.

Reader 9: For all the Border Children who dream of some basic security and who want some hope for a future beyond extreme poverty and violence,

All: Have mercy on them, Oh Lord.

Reader 10: For the leadership in Central America, that they may find the courage and the support to deal with the issues of violence and poverty in their countries,

All: May the Spirit lead them to the path of justice and peace for these children.

Reader 11: For our President and members of Congress, so they may take the necessary steps to welcome and assist this children through policies, legislation and judiciary procedures,

All: May the Spirit lead them to the path of justice and peace for these children

Reader 12: For ourselves, that we may take Christ's words and the teachings of our Church to heart so we may help these children of crisis,

All: May the Spirit lead us to the path of justice and peace for these children.

Leader: Through the Spirit, may we recognize the suffering of the Children of the Border, and in the spirit of our Pope, may we seek authentic encounter with them through our prayers for them, acts of charity, and ongoing advocacy so our voices may be heard and justice may be done. Give us the grace to care. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

FAITH IN ACTION

- For groups doing advocacy for Border Children and for suggested action go to:
 - U.S. Catholic Bishops Office on Migration And Refugee Services: <http://bit.ly/26jjSAh>
 - The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights: <http://bit.ly/1XMq8KW>
 - National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights: <http://bit.ly/1VLvjwX>
 - Jesuit Refugee Service USA: <http://bit.ly/1iCTay5>



Center of
Concern