

World Refugee Day 2017



Toolkit

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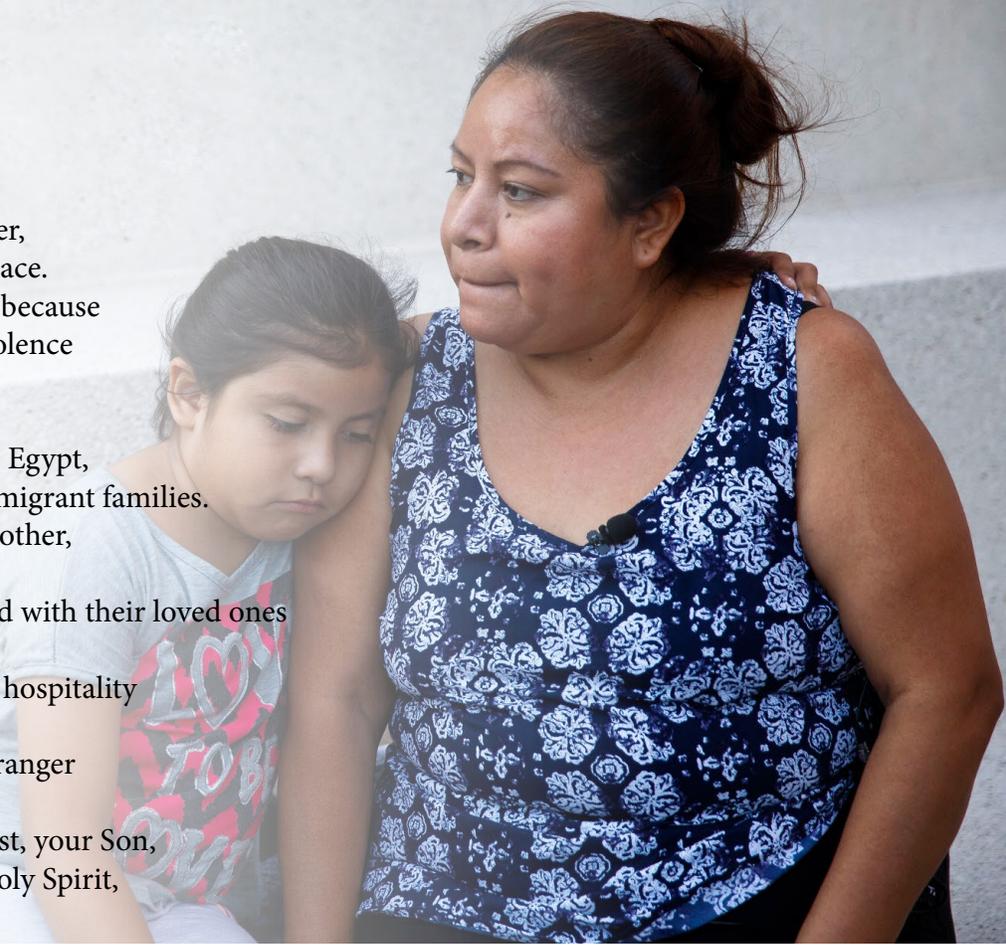
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A Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

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 husband,
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



Credit: CNS/Eugene Garcia

Sample Prayer Intentions

- For all refugees who are forced to flee from their homes, 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 families due to difficult circumstances or death, that God will provide his protection, we pray to the Lord.
- For our bishops, that they will continue in their commitment to lead Catholic social service agencies and encourage parishes in their dioceses to be active partners in refugee resettlement and provide in their communities a place of welcome, we pray to the Lord.
- For Christian faithful and all people of good will, that they might find the compassion to walk in solidarity with refugees and the courage to advocate on their behalf, we pray to the Lord.
- For U.S. and world leaders and elected officials, that they might work together to end the strife and persecution that gives rise to refugee crises, provide care and protection for refugees forced to flee, and share responsibility in helping them build new lives, we pray to the Lord.

Commonly Asked Questions About Refugees

Who is a refugee?

Under U.S. law, a [refugee](#) is a person who is forced to flee his or her home country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of his or her nationality, race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.[i] Refugees do not voluntarily choose to migrate but instead do so out of immediate necessity – often in the context of civil unrest, armed conflict, or other violence motivated by one of the five factors listed above and carried out by a state actor, an individual colluding with the state, or an individual whom the state cannot control.

What is the current state of the refugee system internationally?

Current levels of displacement are some of the highest ever recorded. Worldwide, there are 65.3 million people who have been forced out of their homes (with an estimated 34,000 people displaced per day). While the majority of forced migrants remain in their home countries, [21.3 million](#) have been forced to flee and seek refuge in other countries.[ii] Over half of these refugees are under the age of 18.

Only those individuals who are considered to be the most vulnerable are referred for resettlement in a third country. Despite the extent of global displacement, less than 1% of refugees are submitted for resettlement worldwide. The United States traditionally resettles over half of these individuals. In Fiscal Year 2016, the United States [resettled](#) just under 85,000 refugees, with the most coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Ethiopia, Syria and Iraq.[iii] In recent years, there has also been an increased flow of refugees from Central America to the United States.

How does the processing system work?

The international community has traditionally promoted three durable solutions to displacement situations: (1) voluntary repatriation, (2) integration into the country of first asylum, or (3) resettlement into a third country. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works to find the best solution for each displaced person on an individual basis.

UNHCR is generally responsible for identifying and designating individuals as refugees. UNHCR assists in ensuring the safety and well-being of refugees as they await a placement determination. However, temporary protection for refugees remains a challenge for the international community. Not only do refugees often have to endure life-threatening conditions in order to arrive at their first host country, but, once there, they usually live in confined refugee camp sites or in urban settings, sometimes for as long as a decade.

How Does Refugee Resettlement Work in the United States?

Each year, the President of the United States authorizes the admission of a certain number of refugees into the country. This number, described as the “Presidential Determination” is based on a consultative process between Congress, the President, and various federal agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of State (DOS). A refugee is typically referred to the United States by UNHCR, an embassy, or an authorized non-governmental organization (NGO). A government-funded Resettlement

Support Center (RNC) then facilitates the application process by completing application paperwork and gathering biometric and biographical information needed for the determination and vetting process. During this application process, which typically takes 18 to 24 months to complete, the prospective refugee remains outside of the United States.

Prospective refugees to the United States undergo a rigorous and thorough [screening process](#) that includes vetting through databases held by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Defense, DOS, and DHS. [iv] In addition, the refugee is interviewed by a highly-trained U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer to determine eligibility to the U.S. resettlement program and admissibility to the country. Further review is conducted if an individual's application raises safety or national security concerns and, ultimately, he or she will not be resettled in the United States if such concerns are not resolved. Once USCIS conditionally approves the applicant, he or she must complete a medical examination. Those individuals who receive approval for resettlement undergo a final screening by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection prior to entry into the country.

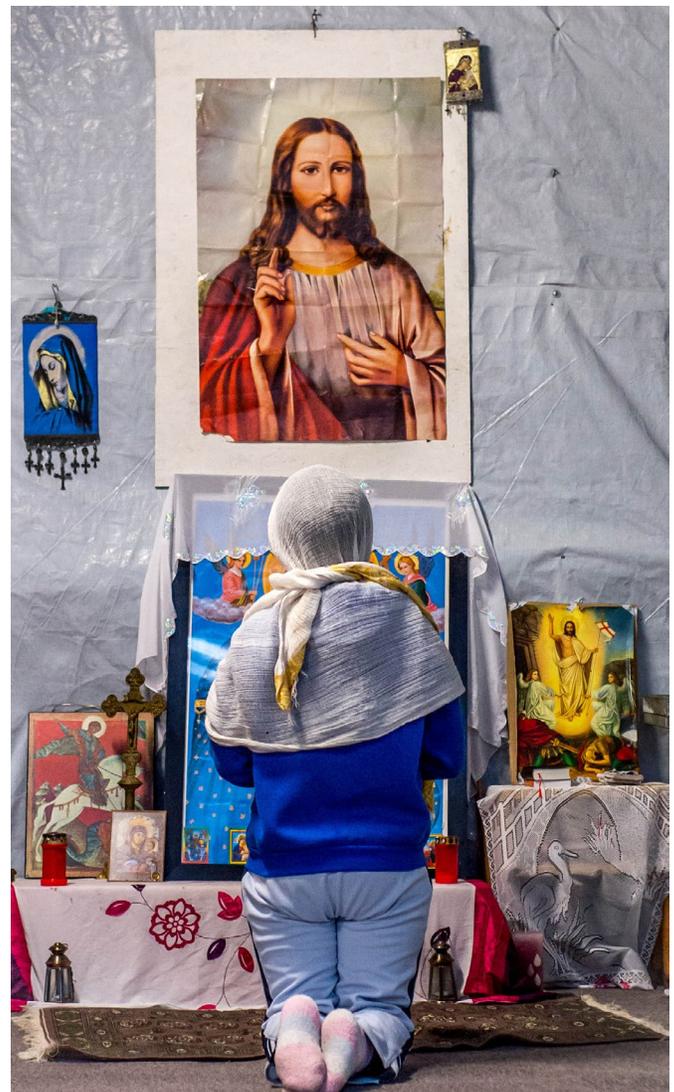
Admitted refugees are assigned to an experienced resettlement agency in the U.S. prior to arrival in order to help ensure their welcome and successful integration into our country. Once in the United States, refugees engage in cultural orientation, English lessons, medical evaluations, and other forms of social support through the resettlement community and other organizations.

What is the Catholic Church's teaching on refugees?

It is a core Catholic teaching that every human being is created in the image of God and is therefore entitled to dignity and respect. The Catholic Church views assisting those in need as a fundamental Christian duty that is derived directly from the life of mercy of Christ, who himself was a migrant and a child of refugees. We as Christians are called to welcome our new neighbors with the same love and compassion we would want ourselves to be shown in a time of persecution. We must remember that refugees from all over the world are sent to our communities and are fleeing danger, exploitation, and persecution.

What is the Catholic Church's Role in U.S. Refugee Resettlement?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) seeks to fulfill the teachings of the Church in the arena of migration. USCCB/MRS is one of nine NGOs in the United States that resettles refugees and advocates for the refugee community. Through cooperative agreements with the federal government, USCCB/MRS works in coordination with partner agencies around the United States to welcome and ensure that the basic needs of each arriving refugee are adequately met. USCCB/MRS also engages in [assessment trips](#) to regions with large refugee populations.





CNS photo/Paul Haring

Sample Talking Points

1. Jesus calls us to welcome refugees and immigrants, and says that when we extend a helping hand to them, we are meeting him face-to-face.
2. The Catholic community supports a refugee program that is safe for refugees and for the communities that welcome them.
3. Today, more than 65 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced from their homes, over 21 million of these individuals are refugees.
4. The U.S. refugee protection and resettlement program has enjoyed bipartisan support for over 30 years, as a humanitarian expression of our core American values and founding principles, as well as a strategic tool to support key allies while stabilizing sensitive regions impacted by forced migration.
5. The resettlement program is a small, life-saving program that protects the most vulnerable refugees and helps to unite families fractured by forced migration.
6. Refugees are the most thoroughly vetted individuals to enter the United States, going through a series of [security screenings](#), including biographic and biometric checks, medical screenings, forensic document testing, and in-person interviews with highly trained government officials. The information examined to confirm a refugee's identity is checked against law enforcement and intelligence databases, including those of the National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security. If there is any doubt about whether a refugee is a security risk, he or she will not be admitted to the United States.
7. Once resettled, refugees contribute to their new communities as friends and neighbors, taxpayers, workers, business owners, doctors, and students.
8. USCCB/MRS, along with [4,000](#) priests, religious brothers and sisters, and deacons oppose any policy that would deny refugees access to resettlement based on their nationality or religion.

Letters to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) is the perfect way to offer a rebuttal, add another perspective, or express your appreciation for an already-published article or commentary piece. Please let us know if your letter to the editor is published! We'll deliver it to elected officials and promote it on our social media. Completing this final step in the letter to the editor process helps ensure that your letter's impact is even greater. Email us at jfi@uscgb.org with a link to your published LTE.

Letter to the Editor Writing Tips

- **Keep it short** (150-250 words) – If you don't edit your LTE, the news outlet might edit it for you. It's best to write something both punchy and brief.
- **Speak in your own voice.** Tell why the article matters to you. Talk about your faith, professional experience or knowledge of migration and refugees. Be personal and authentic.
- **Think local.** Editors are generally more interested in letters that highlight local impacts. Relate the issues raised in a national piece on refugees to issues impacting your own community.
- **Get personal.** Refugees are people fleeing persecution. Personalize your perspective with a story about people who are refugees or people you know affected by migration- a family member or someone you know from your church.
- Consider submitting your letter to your diocesan newspaper and your parish newsletter for publication.

Best Practices

- 1) Reference a recent article in the publication to which you are writing the LTE. Your letter is most likely to be published if it responds directly to the newspaper's recent coverage of a specific issue. Mention the article you're responding to by its headline and date.
- 2) Send your LTE in the body of your email, not as an attachment.
- 3) Include your relevant information, such as: your full name, contact information, location, and profession or expertise in the email as well. (The paper will not print your contact information.)
- 4) Be timely – Try to submit your LTE within 1-3 days after the relevant article was published.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Your recent article, [name of article], discussing the issue of refugees/refugee resettlement was alarming [or reaffirming (depends on tone of article)]. [name of State or community] has a proud history of welcoming newcomers, refugees, and newly naturalized citizens. Our community has benefited from refugees; they contribute to the local economy through hard work and entrepreneurial spirit (if responding to a negative article you can, for example, emphasize the secure nature of program, which is ensured through an established set of in-depth security and medical checks). It is imperative that our communities continue to provide a warm and welcoming presence to newcomers, so that they can feel a part of the community and contribute to its ongoing prosperity.

Sample Social Media for World Refugee Day

Twitter

Today we celebrate #WorldRefugeeDay. Let everyone know that you support and protect the right for #RefugeesWelcome in the United States.

On #WorldRefugeeDay we pause and remember the 21M people who have had to flee their countries in search of safety for their families.

#Refugees are people looking for the same thing that everyone wants: happiness and a safe home for their families.
#WorldRefugeeDay

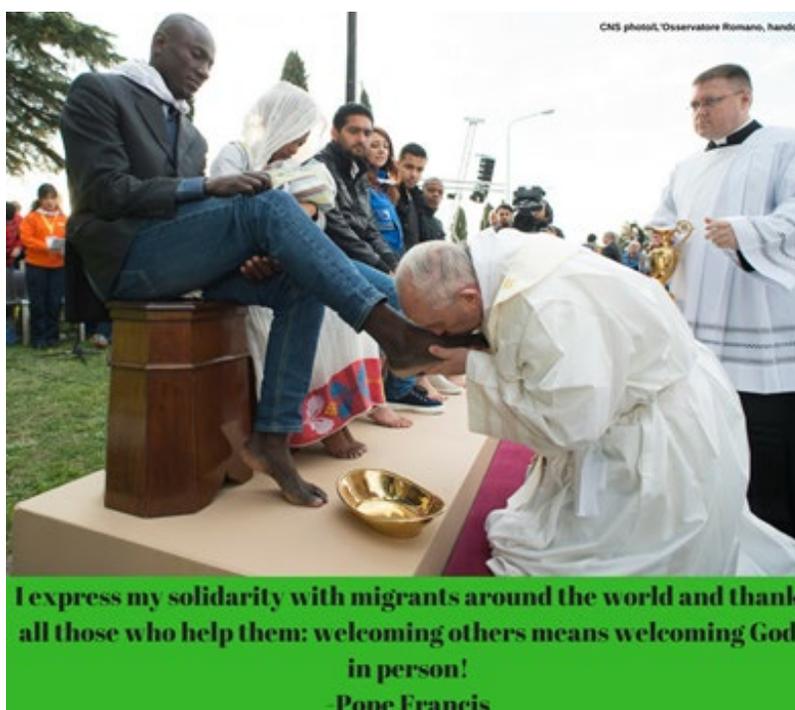
On #WorldRefugeeDay we remember the sacrifice those who have been forced from their homes make to seek safety for their families

Don't know any #Refugees? Here are some you may know: Albert Einstein, Gloria Estefan , Henry Kissinger, Madeline Albright. #WorldRefugeeDay

Facebook

On #WorldRefugeeDay take a moment and remember the 21 million people who have had to flee their homes and countries in search of safety for their families and loved ones.

Sample Image



World Refugee Day Advocacy: Community Engagement Ideas

Reach out to your member of Congress

- Participate in the [calls to action](#) produced by the Justice for Immigrants Campaign as a mechanism to make your voice heard by your members of Congress.
- [Organize or participate in](#) in-district visits to your member of Congress so that you can express your opinion on these issues.
- Join the [Justice for Immigrants Campaign](#) so that you can learn about further advocacy related activities in which you can participate.

Become active in your community

- Celebrate a Mass or prayer service in your local parish on or around World Refugee Day. Focus on migration in the readings and in the intentions of the prayers of the faithful. Use our Resources.
- Hold an information session or speaker panel with a refugee or immigrant member of your community or parish. Please use our [background resources](#) on refugees
- Present on [Catholic Social Teaching and Migration](#) to youth and church groups.
- Write a letter to the editor to promote education on refugee resettlement.
- Volunteer to teach English to newcomers. Contact your [local Catholic Charities](#) to find out if such an opportunity exists in your community.
- Hold a refugee simulation event using this [guide](#) from the Catholic Charities of Louisville or the [Refugees Seeking Safety tool](#) from Cabrini University.
- Post on social media from our materials; post pictures of your event on social media. Sign up for UNHCR Refugee Day [updates](#).
- Host a potluck with newcomers in your community to try new foods and encounter and learn about new cultures.
- Organize a walk or a similar community event to help raise awareness on migration issues.
- Ask your local Catholic school recognize World Refugee Day in some way (an announcement in the morning bulleting, reciting the WRD prayer at the end of the school day before dismissal, assigning school children to discuss with their parents the Holy Family as refugees and writing about the discussion.).
- Become a [foster parent](#) for an unaccompanied child! USCCB/MRS currently provides foster care to unaccompanied children in the following locations: Texas, Michigan, Arizona, Virginia, New York, California, Washington, Mississippi, Florida and Utah. For more information email migratingchildren@usccb.org.
- Become involved in your local [Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees Program](#), if you have one, or through your local parish organize a group who will provide support for newly arriving refugees. Contact Daniel Sturm for more information: DSturm@usccb.org

BE SURE TO LET US KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO CELEBRATE WORLD REFUGEE DAY!

Let us know by email at JFI@usccb.org



CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

