

PRAYER SERVICE for IMMIGRANTS

Leader:

Our faith challenges us to a journey, an ongoing conversion of the heart. Our Scriptures are filled with journey narratives: Abraham brings his family to a new land as part of a new covenant, Moses leads his people through deserts back to the promised land, Mary and Joseph must travel to Bethlehem and later flee to Egypt. Jesus spends his ministry journeying through the Holy Land, often “with no place to lay his head.” In his teaching, he reminded his followers that what they do to the least of these, they do to him: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35). Today we are called to compassion and support for those who migrate from their homes and from loved ones because of the violence of conflict and the violence of poverty.

All: Help us on our journey of faith as we open our hearts to the teachings of our Church.

Reader 1:

From Pope John Paul II: “The Church considers the problem of migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God, to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant; in order to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership, but on the common justice. The Church acts in continuity with Christ’s mission. She seeks to involve in the work of solidarity those Christian communities frequently infected by a public opinion that is often hostile to immigrants. For Christians, the migrant is a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility. “What have you done to your brother?” The answer should not be limited to what is imposed by law, but should be made in the manner of solidarity. (from *Message for World Migration Day 1996*)

All: Help us grow in solidarity toward our brothers and sisters in Christ who have journeyed far from their homes as migrants searching for bread, peace and dignity.

Reader 2:

From Pope Benedict XVI: “Christian communities are to pay special attention to migrant workers and their families by accompanying them with prayer, solidarity and Christian charity, by enhancing what is reciprocally enriching, as well as by fostering new political, economic and social planning that promotes respect for the dignity of every human person, the safeguarding of the family, access to dignified housing, to work and to welfare.” (from *Message for World Migration Day 2012*)

All: Help us show compassion towards all who have come to this nation of immigrants and help us speak out for justice for the migrants and their families in our communities.

Reader 3:

From the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: “Just as on the road to Emmaus, Christ’s disciples met him in the guise of a stranger, Christ makes himself present to each of us in the lonesome traveler, the newcomer, and the migrant. We are called to open our hearts and provide hospitality to those in need. It is our duty to create a space of welcome and acceptance to the migrant who finds himself or herself far away from home and in a vulnerable situation. Catholics are called to proclaim the Church’s message



of hope and welcome; to create a society that acknowledges the vital contributions of migrants, refugees, and other newcomers to the United States; and to seek to gain basic rights and protections for those living and working outside society's mainstream. (from *Welcoming Christ in the Migrant*, 2011)

All: Help us recognize Christ in the immigrants in our communities and give us the courage to speak out and support our Church's call for respecting the dignity of all human beings who are in our nation.

Leader: Let us all affirm that Christ asks us to respond from the ground of a love he has modeled, especially when we are faced with social problems, rather than responding from fear.

All: Ground us in your love, O Lord, and guide us by your loving concern for all your children, including "the least of these" among us. Help us move beyond our fears and insecurities, so we may welcome the strangers in our midst, as you have instructed us to do. Guide us through our Bishops to just action.

Reader 4:

Let us reflect on the actions the Bishops of the U.S. and Mexico discussed in their joint pastoral letter *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, which called for a series of reforms to the broken U.S. immigration system they consider broken. These include policies to address the root causes of migration, which include war and global poverty; reform of our immigration system, including an earned legalization program and a temporary worker program with appropriate worker protections, and restoration of due process for all immigrants. Let us support and pray for these reforms, and let us pray for all those who have experienced the hope and the pains of migration.

All:

Fleeing from Herod, Mary and Joseph
 Took the child Jesus
 On a difficult journey to a foreign land.
 To Jesus we entrust
 The mothers, the fathers, the children
 Who today are holy families,
 Migrating in hope, in fear, in longing,
 For peace, for some security,
 For something like a home.

May they find their journey's end
 As we open ourselves to their stories,
 Their needs, their hopes;
 We ask for mercy for all migrants,
 And for our communities
 Who are challenged to welcome them,
 To offer compassion
 And a place at the table
 Where God's abundance
 Nourishes us all.