

National Migration Week 2021

September 20-26, 2021



Credit: Migrants and Refugees Section/Vatican

Toward an Ever Wider “We”



Migration and Refugee Services

Renewing Hope. Seeking Justice.

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

National Migration Week

Toward an Ever Wider “We” September 20-26, 2021

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we are one family under God

Toward an Ever Wider “We”

National Migration Week 2021



For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week, which is an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking.

National Migration Week for 2021 takes place September 20-26, and will climax with the Vatican’s celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), which always falls on the last Sunday of September. The primary theme for this year’s WDMR is “*Towards an ever wider ‘we’*”. In his letter announcing this year’s theme, Pope Francis emphasizes that “this focus calls on us to ensure that ‘after all this, we will think no longer in terms of ‘them’ and ‘those,’ but only ‘us’” (Fratelli tutti, no. 35). And this universal us must become a reality first of all within the Church which is called to cultivate communion in diversity.”

In solidarity with the Vatican, National Migration Week will use the same theme as WDMR – “*Towards an ever wider we’* – but will emphasize the particular ways in which this theme and its application to the migration question is important for the Catholic Church in the United States.

Let us take some time during the upcoming National Migration Week to reflect on how we can better welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants living in our midst.

How can we counter the globalization of indifference that affects us all, to some degree or another? What policies can we promote that will affirm the dignity of migrants and better secure the common good? How do we work more fully to promote a Church for all?

National Migration Week Talking Points

- Catholics are called to stand with immigrants and refugees as our brothers and sisters. This is who the Catholic Church is. This is what we as Catholics do.
- Pope Francis invites us to be part of a culture of encounter as we welcome, protect, integrate, and promote immigrants and refugees in our midst.
- Immigration is about real people who are trying to find a better life and a new beginning. It's about more than statistics, it's about families. As Pope Francis stated, "Each migrant has a name, a face and a story."
- Welcoming immigrants is part of Catholic Social Teaching and reflects the Biblical tradition to welcome the stranger.
- The Catholic Church has been welcoming immigrants and refugees to the United States since the nation's founding and has been integral to helping them integrate into American culture.
- In addition to welcoming and caring for those in need, the Church continues to uphold the centrality of family reunification as a critical component of our immigration and refugee systems.
- Forced displacement of people is at the highest level since World War II, with more than 65 million people displaced around the world and over 22 million refugees.
- Refugees are the most rigorously screened population coming into America. This screening happens before they ever set foot in our country. The United States has the most thorough background checks of immigrants of any nation in the world.

Get Engaged!

Letters to the Editor Tips

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) is the perfect way to add another perspective, offer a rebuttal, 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 migrationweek@usccb.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. Since they could cut out your main point, 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 climate change. Be personal and authentic.
- **Get local.** Editors are generally more interested in letters that highlight local impacts. Can you relate the issues raised in a national piece on migration and immigration to issues impacting your own community?
- **Get personal.** Migrants are people on the move, but they are first and foremost human beings with families. Show that human side. Personalize your perspective with a story about people you know affected by migration—a family member or someone you know from your church.
- **Follow these best practices:**
 - 1) **Reference a recent article (if possible).** Your letter is most likely to be published if it responds directly to the newspaper's recent coverage of a specific migration 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 contact information:** Include your full name, contact information, location, and profession or expertise (if relevant) in the email as well. (The paper will not print your contact information.)
- **Be timely** – Try to get your LTE in within one to three days the relevant article is published.

National Migration Week Sample Letters to The Editor

ENGLISH

Dear Editor:

Your recent article, [name of article], discussing the issue of immigration/refugees was alarming [or reaffirming (depends on tone of article)]. [name of State or community] has a proud history of welcoming newcomers, including immigrants, refugees, and newly naturalized citizens.

It is imperative that our local 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 well-being and prosperity. In fact, more than 40% of America's largest companies were founded either by immigrants or the children of immigrants. Newcomers, such as immigrants and refugees are indeed a part of our future community well-being.

OR (in an article that has a religious angle or mentions a bishop, Church leader, or the Catholic Church)

Dear Editor,

Your recent article, [name of article], discussing the issue of immigration/refugees was alarming [or reaffirming (depends on tone of article)]. As a Catholic, I have long held pro-immigration/pro-refugee beliefs and support for migrant communities as a central feature of my life of faith. We affirm that all people – immigrants and native born alike – are made in the image and likeness of God whose human dignity is deserving of respect. The Church celebrates National Migration Week this week, which is a week-long opportunity to raise awareness on Catholic teachings related to migration. It is encouraging to see religious leaders stand in solidarity of migrants and encourage positive reforms that will help to fix our broken immigration system during this special time for the Church.

SPANISH

Estimado Editor:

En su reciente artículo [nombre del artículo], donde discute el asunto de la inmigración/los refugiados ha sido alarmante [o reafirmante (dependiendo del tono del artículo)]. [Nombre del Estado o de la comunidad] conserva una orgullosa historia de acoger a los recién llegados, incluyendo a los inmigrantes, los refugiados y a los nuevos ciudadanos naturalizados.

Es imperativo que nuestras comunidades locales continúen ofreciendo una presencia cálida y acogedora a los recién llegados para que ellos sientan que son parte de la comunidad y contribuyan a su continuo florecimiento. De hecho, más del 40% de las grandes compañías en los Estados Unidos fueron establecidas por inmigrantes o por hijos de inmigrantes. Los recién llegados, los inmigrantes y los refugiados, forman realmente parte de la futura prosperidad de nuestras comunidades.

OR (en un artículo que tenga un ángulo religioso o que mencione a un obispo, líder de la Iglesia o a la Iglesia Católica)

Estimado Editor,

Su reciente artículo, [nombre del artículo], donde discutía el asunto de la inmigración ha sido alarmante [o reafirmante (dependiendo del tono del artículo)]. Como católico, por mucho tiempo he mantenido a la inmigración y al apoyo por las comunidades inmigrantes como una característica central de mi fe. Nosotros afirmamos que todos los individuos— inmigrantes y nativos por igual—han sido hechos a imagen y semejanza de Dios y se merecen nuestro respeto y apoyo. Mientras que esta semana la Iglesia celebra la Semana Nacional de la Migración, lo cual brinda una oportunidad para concientizar sobre sus enseñanzas relacionadas a la migración, es muy alentador ver a los líderes religiosos en solidaridad con los migrantes y apoyando unas reformas positivas que servirán para arreglar nuestro quebrado sistema migratorio.



Credit: CNS/David Maung

National Migration Week Social Media Suggestions

Twitter Posts

When tweeting, please be sure to include @uscbbjfi and/or @MRSServes so we can know what you are doing and retweet your post. Please also try to add the hashtags: NMW2021

.@Pontifex says offer the warmth and love of Christ to immigrants and you will unlock the mystery of their heart.
#NMW

During #NMW @MRSServes recognizes the need for compassionate immigration reform - will work to make it happen
#refugeeswelcome

Durante #NMW @MRSServes reconoce la necesidad de una reforma de inmigración compasiva y nosotros trabajaremos para que sea posible

La dura situación de los refugiados siempre ha estado present. Jesús fue un refugiado, en Su Nombre trabajamos para ellos

Facebook posts

Please be sure to link any Facebook post to www.justiceforimmigrants.org . See sample Facebook posts below:

Celebrate the human dignity of migrants this week as we celebrate National Migration Week (#NMW). Encourage those around you to know that #refugeeswelcome here.

There are currently more than 70 million people around the world who have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to political instability, violence, and other reasons. We must continue to stand in solidarity with our refugee and migrant brothers and sisters. #RefugeesWelcome

En la actualidad hay más de 70 millones de personas alrededor del mundo quienes han sido desplazadas forzosamente de sus hogares debido a la inestabilidad política, la violencia y otras razones. Nosotros debemos seguir solidarizándonos con nuestras hermanas y hermanos refugiados y migrantes
#RefugeesWelcome

National Migration Week Advocacy: Community Engagement Ideas

It is important that you engage your local community through educational, advocacy and direct service opportunities. Please find some suggestions how you can do this effectively, and some opportunities in your area that you might be able to engage for this purpose.

- Celebrate a Mass or prayer service in your local parish to coincide with National Migration Week.
- Hold an information session or panel talk with a refugee or immigrant member of your community or parish.
- Present on Catholic Social Teaching and Migration to your youth and church groups.
- Write a letter to the editor to promote education on migration.
- Volunteer to teach English to newcomers.
- Post on social media from our materials; post pictures of your event on social media.
- Host a potluck with newcomers in your community to try new foods and encounter and learn about new cultures.
- Learn more about the [Refugee Orchestra Project](#) and other initiatives that can highlight the situation confronting refugees and immigrant populations.
- [Host](#) a refugee experience event on your campus or in your local community
- Organize a walk or a similar community event to help raise awareness on migration issues.
- Include migration-focused intentions in the prayer to the faithful.
- Volunteer at your local [Catholic Charities](#) to work at a citizenship workshop.
- See our backgrounder "[10 things you can do](#)" for more ideas.
- BE SURE TO LET US KNOW WHAT YOU DID TO CELEBRATION NATIONAL MIGRATION WEEK!

Let us know about your NMW activities by email at migrationweek@usccb.org

National Catholic Initiatives on Migration Engagement

[Become a Foster Parent](#)

When refugee and immigrant children are all alone on their journey, USCCB/MRS Foster Care programs welcome them and help place them with families, homes communities that support them on their way to become productive members of American society. We are seeking families that can welcome teenage refugees and immigrants into their home for a lifelong relationship that will bless the child's life and those who foster. You can learn more about our national network of foster care programs and next steps to become a foster parent at www.usccb.org/fostercare.

[Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees \(POWIR\)](#)

POWIR is a program launched by the USCCB in 2008 that aims to help local communities build partnerships with newly arrived refugees who are making their transition to life in the United States. The program seeks to strengthen parish and community support for refugees; increase donations to fund additional refugee services; recruit volunteers to help with jobs, ESL, transportation & housing; and organize special refugee events and outreach

activities. Since its establishment, POWIR has recruited 16,000 volunteers, 1,300 parishes and countless other groups to assist and welcome refugees. POWIR has provided opportunities for refugees to find employment quickly and to assist in their integration. POWIR programs on the local level provide a model that can be replicated elsewhere as a mechanism to welcome refugees and immigrants.

[The Catholic Accompaniment and Reflection Experience \(CARE\)](#)

The Catholic Accompaniment and Reflection Experience (CARE) is a new pilot initiative committed to connecting Catholic volunteers as well as men and women religious with undocumented immigrants in need of accompaniment and emotional and spiritual support. The CARE program aims to provide accompaniment to and solidarity with undocumented immigrants and their families while they comply with immigration proceedings and to further Catholic community support for immigrants at the parish and local community level. CARE also aims to empower undocumented and mixed status families and local community supporters to raise awareness and educate about current immigration realities and advocate for change. The Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis are the pilot sites for the initial CARE program kick off. Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of the Archdiocese of San Francisco and Archbishop Charles Thompson of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis have both strongly voiced their support for the program and its' goals. The two archdioceses will also serve as mentors to new sites that are added as the CARE program further develops.

Pray

National Migration Week Sample Petitions

For all bishops in our Church, that each may be encouraged by our prayers and support to lead God's people in building a culture that respects the human dignity of all migrants, we pray to the Lord,

For all Catholics, that God inspire them to act in their local communities to support and protect migrants and to advocate on their behalf, we pray to the Lord,

For our neighbors, coworkers, friends, fellow Christians, and all people, that they may grow in their awareness of the issue of migration and become a voice in the public square calling for greater protections for these populations, we pray to the Lord,

For migrants, refugees, and all other strangers in our midst, that they may find strength in our concern for justice and feel the warmth of our love, we pray to the Lord.

For all refugees who are forced to flee from their homes, that God bring peace to them, their families and their country of origin, we pray to the Lord

Homily suggestions for National Migration Week:

“No American institution does more for immigrants than your Christian communities. Now you are facing this stream of Latin immigration which affects many of your dioceses. Not only as the Bishop of Rome, but also as a pastor from the South, I feel the need to thank and encourage you.” —Pope Francis, Prayer with the Bishops of the United States of America, September 2015

Immigrants who come to the United States, and particularly those who are undocumented, are a particularly vulnerable population who have often fled violence and persecution and are often seeking safety, family reunification, and economic opportunity. Given the trauma many have endured, community efforts to accompany, assist, and stand in solidarity are vital. Our moral tradition calls on all people of faith and goodwill to stand up in defense of life and human dignity—regardless of one’s immigration status; it is a fundamental calling for us as Catholics. Scripture speaks repeatedly of the migration experience, from Abraham who was sent out from his homeland in the Old Testament, to the Holy Family who fled Herod and lived their lives for a time as refugees in a foreign land. When the scriptural or liturgical texts address migration and themes related to it, whether on special occasions or on regular Sundays, the homily can be an effective moment for prophetic instruction and encouragement.

As Catholics we recognize that our earthly existence is temporary as we look toward with hope our return to the presence of God. In recalling the temporal nature and recognizing the relative character of the goods of the earth, we must also guard against identifying too closely with the artificial divisions that separate one person from another, divisions that become visible too often with respect to things like economic class or national origin. We must always behave towards others in such a way that respects their human dignity and respects their image made in God’s likeness. We are called on to follow the path that God laid out for us and heed to the example of Christ, who “endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb 12:1-4).

Welcoming the migrant and migration more broadly has a central place in the development of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Stories in both the Old and the New Testament highlight the fact that in providing hospitality to the stranger we might also be unknowingly entertaining angels (Heb 13:2; Gen 18:1-15). Abraham provides hospitality to the Lord in Mamre and the Lord helped secure he and Sara a child. Not only did Abraham show such hospitality freely, but he himself was once a migrant. The Letter to the Hebrews, highlights the story of Abraham who, by faith, “obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing exactly where he was called to go. By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country.” (Heb 11). It might be worth reminding those at Mass that our very faith has its roots by the decision made by one man, Abraham—a migrant—who decided to follow God’s command to travel to a foreign land.

Too often the media messages that we hear in relation to migrants is distorted and provides a false understanding of who migrants are and why they come. The rhetoric surrounding this issue can easily bias people in ways that do not properly appreciate the benefits that migrants can bring to our communities. Teach people about what the Church’s rich body of social thought says about our Christian responsibility to “welcome the stranger among us.”

2021 National Migration Week Prayer

Loving Father,

We thank you for the gift of children
And for the joy and love that they bring into our lives.
Protect with your fatherly care all children who face hardship.

In particular, we pray for unaccompanied migrant children who are alone,
For migrant children separated from parents who have been placed in
detention,
For those who have lost loved ones due to violence,
And for those who are trapped in situations of exploitation.

Open all of our hearts to immigrant and refugee children in need.
Show us how we can protect and comfort them.
Give us the wisdom to know how we can help.

Give us courage to defend them
against those who would harm them.
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