

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES PROGRAM

Background Information

The Ketteler Legacy for Justice Committee is an ongoing working committee of the Sisters of Divine Providence of the Marie de la Roche Province.

Members of The Ketteler Legacy for Justice Committee are:

Sr. Carmen González Arias, Linda Hoefflin, Sr. Paulita Kuzy, Pat Montgomery, Sr. Betsa Palomino Montalvo, Sr. Betty Sundry and Sr. Carol Stenger

Our goal is to continue to address one of the issues of the day that touches on Migrants, Immigrants, Refugees, and Victims of Human Trafficking. The following packet includes:

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Opening Prayer
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Closing Prayer**

Introduction

Since we Sisters and Associate in our province adopted, as our Corporate Stance, a commitment to a Consistent Ethic of Life, and then again in 2010 took a Corporate Stance against Human Trafficking, we invite you to prayerfully experience the very informative and prayerful materials that address the plight of millions of our brothers and sisters around the world who are searching for what we may take for granted: a safe, secure home and place to raise a family without the fear of being oppressed, or taken into slavery or even killed.

Please invite those you know to join you in viewing the information. Discuss what you have learned and what you are willing to do to make a difference as you “listen” to the cry of our poorest brothers and sisters who are negatively affected by the conflicts within and around the world today.

Together we can and do make a difference in the name of the God of Providence.

Opening Prayer:

We exalt Your Providence, Oh God, and we commit ourselves to making your Providence more visible in our world. Spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlighten our minds to perceive the mysteries of the universe. Spirit of right judgment and courage, guide us and make us firm in our baptismal decision to follow Jesus' way of love. Spirit of knowledge and reverence; help us to see the lasting value of justice and mercy in our everyday dealings with one another and with our

sisters and brothers who find themselves searching for a safe home for themselves and their children. May we work to solve problems of migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking throughout the world and especially those at our southern border. Spirit of God, spark our faith, hope and love into new action each day. Fill our lives with wonder and awe in your presence which penetrates all creation as we strive to assist those in need. We ask this in the name of our Provident God – Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Please take time to Reflect on each Statement below, pausing in between:

1. “When they (the Magi) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.’ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt. . .” [Matthew 2: 13, 14]
2. Ever since becoming Pope on March 13, 2013, Francis, the son of migrants, has sought to awaken the consciences of people worldwide to the plight of migrants and refugees, which is the result of the biggest humanitarian crisis since the end of the Second World War and now involves, according to the United Nations, some 70.8 million people who are forced to leave their own country, including 30 million refugees.
3. With this dramatic reality in mind, Pope Francis today repeated the words he had first uttered when he visited the island of Lampedusa on July 8, 2013 to mourn the thousands who had drowned in the Mediterranean Sea on their way to seek refuge in Europe: “Today, the culture of comfort... makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people... which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalization of indifference.”
[America, September 29, 2019]
4. “The times are becoming steadily more portentous and critical. The storm clouds that gather over our heads become ever more ominous; and as they do, the call of our Church becomes more and more urgent like the plea of a mother who sees her children threatened by great danger.” [Emmanuel von Ketteler, Dec. 3, 1848]

Educational Materials

Some Background Information

A. Refugees & Asylum Seekers

The definition of a “Refugee” is a person who has crossed from one’s own country into another country to flee conflict or persecution due to race, religion, nationality, human rights violations, or gang violence and is unable or unwilling to return to the country of origin for fear of torture, extortion or death. Many of the people coming to the U.S./Mexico border would fall into the category of refugee, asylum seeker, or migrant. The U.S. State Department defines each of those terms differently, but in this narrative we will use just the term refugee so as not to confuse.

Global Sisters Report brings a sharper focus to the plight of refugees living in camps, seeking asylum, experiencing resettlement and integration, and, for some, being deported to a country they may only vaguely remember or that may still be dangerous. Though not every refugee follows this exact pattern, these stages in the journey are emblematic for many — and at every stage, Catholic women religious are doing what they can to help. We are a part of this effort through our ministry at La Posada in San Benito, TX and Charity House in Allison Park plus the efforts our Sisters have made in Kingston at Providence House and our Sisters in Aufshaffenberg, Germany. We also want to acknowledge the recent efforts of Sr. Josephine Macias who spent time this past December 2019 at the US/Mexican border assisting those fleeing oppression and entering the USA.

We are in sync with our Holy Father, Pope Francis who encourages us “to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.” When we think of the corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, shelter the homeless – along with the spiritual works of mercy - this is our call as women and men of Providence.

We can’t imagine the trust people fleeing their countries must have in God and in themselves as well as the courage it takes to carry one’s few possessions and begin the walk or boat trip to find a better life in a new land, thousands of miles away. It is deprivation or desperation that leads one to risk everything for a dream of a better life for them and their children.

Those seeking refuge face numerous obstacles. Families are being turned away before they can reach the border to ask for asylum. Those who managed to cross the U.S. border found their children at risk when a “zero tolerance” policy announced by the Trump administration in April separated more than 2,300 children from parents. The policy provoked outrage and has since been rescinded; a federal judge ordered that children be reunited with parents. Sad to say that now under tougher U.S. policies, domestic violence and gang violence will no longer typically qualify for asylum claims.

B. As the Global Refugee Crisis Intensifies

by Patrice Taddonio Digital Writer & Audience Development Strategist, FRONTLINE

“The number of refugees across the globe increased from 22.5 million in 2016 to 25.4 million in 2017, according to a Global Trends report released today by UNHCR — the biggest one-year increase recorded by the UN Refugee Agency. Those 25.4 million refugees are among the more than 68 million people worldwide who had been displaced by “persecution, conflict, or generalized violence” by the end of 2017, the report said. It stated that 16.2 million of the world’s displaced people were newly or re-displaced in 2017, with the rest having been displaced in years prior. In addition to Palestine refugees, most of the world’s refugee population came from Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia, the report said — with children younger than 18 making up just over 50 percent of refugees.

The report, which comes amid an outcry in the United States over the separation of families apprehended at the southern border (which is still going on), also noted an “increase in refugees and asylum-seekers from the north of Central America,” where unrest and violence in countries like Venezuela has persisted or intensified. But most refugees, according to the report, have fled not to the U.S. or Europe but to developing nations.”

For more information on Refugees and Asylum Seekers through viewing documentaries etc.: Google: PBS - Documentaries on Refugees; YouTube Videos: Super Bowl Half Time Show – a prophetic message with Jennifer Lopez et al; Ricky Martin Foundation; US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) and their webinars and monthly newsletter; Talitha Kum International and other such sites!

There you will find numerous video documentaries on peoples of many Middle Eastern countries fleeing to escape war, violence, extreme poverty, and oppression. Even if you watch just one, you get a real sense of the fears and hardships they faced as they made the treacherous journey as you see that many died in the attempt.

C. Ideas on How to Help Refugees

You make a difference. Join the thousands of people helping to save, protect, and rebuild the lives of the world’s most vulnerable people. There are many ways that you can help:

1. **Make** it a habit to pray for refugees throughout the world daily.
2. **Learn more:** Read Justice for Immigrants’ backgrounder on the cost of family separation and other related readings. Go on the internet and get the facts about Refugees/read about their personal experiences here in the U.S.
3. **Volunteer** your specific skill – driving, babysitting, teaching English, etc.
4. **Donate** gently used or new clothing
5. **Write/Call** your legislator about not separating refugee families, not taking children from their parents.
6. **Speak up:** Contact government representatives to oppose repressive legislation and advocate for humane policies.
7. **Employ** Refugees if they are able to work.
8. **Welcome** refugees into your neighborhood community
9. **Organize** prayer vigils and ask pastors to include prayers for migrants in Sunday liturgies.
10. **Take action:** Contact your local Catholic Charities offices, if they are resettling refugees, or any agency in your area that is resettling refugees and ask if you can volunteer in any way.
11. **Host** refugees and asylum seekers in your home. ...
12. **Help** refugees to integrate into a new culture. ...
13. **Encourage** your college/business to offer refugee scholarships. ...

D. Pause and Reflect:

Imagine you are told you must take a journey that is necessary in order save your life! You can only take five things with you as you hurriedly pack to begin to move out of your present home. These are the five things you feel are essential for your trip: (List your items)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Now imagine at the first border you need to cross, you must pay something in order to cross into the next area. It will cost you one of the five things listed above to assure safe passage. Cross off one of the five things listed above so that you can continue.

Again you want to travel to safety but you come across another barrier and must pay by selling another one of your four remaining items listed above. Cross off the one that will allow you to move forward.

After many days and concerns you move on and yet are stopped again on your long journey and must appease those at the border who demand payment. You offer one of your remaining items listed above that they take for payment. Cross of this third item listed above.

A few days later and weary on your journey you are expected to sell another item from your original list in order to be given room in the tiny boat that will carry you across a large body of water. You know you must give one of the last two items on your list and you do this and enter the small boat.

As you arrive on shore, those there to greet you expect some payment and you give them your last item you were hoping to keep. So with tears running down your face you give your last item for payment.

Now you are in a strange land, with only the clothes on your back. You are hungry and don't speak the language of this new "homeland." You rely on others to help you and worry that you won't be respected or treated with dignity. But you are safe and will trust in God for all you need, hoping to be treated as neighbor in a foreign land.

Closing Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, place in my heart the gift of understanding that I may be continually aware of the plight of those who seek to achieve merely the basic right to live free from malice and threat, no matter where they live or where they seek to find a peaceful and secure home on our planet

Earth. We ask this in the name of our Provident God who is Father/Mother, Brother/Sister to us all. Amen.