

God walks with his people.

2024 World Day of Migrants and Refugees/National Migration Week
September 23-29

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JUSTICE
FOR IMMIGRANTS

The United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops/Migration and
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About National Migration Week

In a world marked by immense suffering, the plight of migrants and refugees stands out as a pressing global issue. The World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR) is an opportunity for global church and the Catholic faithful to engage in prayer, reflection, and action on behalf of our brothers and sisters who are forced to flee their homes. National Migration Week is a uniquely US-based celebration that builds on the ideas put forth in WDMR and shaped accordingly to American public. In 2024 we will celebrate National Migration Week September 23 – 29, which culminates with WDMR that Sunday the 29th.

In his latest message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis emphasizes the theme “God Walks with His People.” This theme serves as a reminder that God consistently accompanies His people throughout history, guiding and providing for them, much like He did for

the Israelites. Pope Francis draws a parallel between the experiences of migrants today and the ancient Israelites’ journey from slavery to freedom, highlighting the similar challenges of oppression and hardship they face.

Pope Francis states, “Like the people of Israel in the time of Moses, migrants often flee from oppression, abuse, insecurity, discrimination, and lack of opportunities for development. Similar to the Jews in the desert, migrants encounter many obstacles in their path: they are tried by thirst and hunger; they are exhausted by toil and disease; they are tempted by despair.”

As Catholics, we are commanded by Jesus (MT 25) to provide support and care for the most vulnerable among us, including the naked, the hungry, the imprisoned, and the stranger. Through this outreach, we are called to accompany migrants at all stages of their journey: from the point of origin, through transit, and to their final destination.

God walks with His people: Message of Pope Francis

Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2024

“[God walks with His people](#)”, is the title chosen by Pope Francis for his Message for the upcoming World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), which will be celebrated on Sunday, September 29, 2024.

In this message, the Holy Father reminds us that all of us, God’s people, are migrants on this earth, on our way to the “true homeland”, the Kingdom of Heaven. Migrants are a contemporary icon of this people on a journey, of the Church on a journey, and at the same time, it is in them and in all our vulnerable brothers and sisters that we can encounter the Lord who walks with us.

For this reason, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is promoting a communication campaign in preparation for the WDMR2024 in which it invites all people of goodwill to organize initiatives with migrants, refugees, vulnerable people. Be sure to follow what they are doing at the [Dicastery homepage](#). WDMR 2024 resources are also available for download.

Download the Vatican WDMR Resources



Accompaniment and the Catholic Church

2024 National Migration Week/World Day of Migrants and Refugees

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What is Accompaniment?

In the context of migration, accompanying migrants involves helping, supporting, serving, and advocating for them from the beginning of their migration experience to its end. Accompaniment fosters mutual understanding and provides formation and leadership opportunities for both directly impacted communities and their supporters.

Examples of accompaniment include:

- Assisting undocumented immigrants with their regular check-ins with ICE or attending mandatory immigration hearings and court proceedings.
- Helping unaccompanied children and their parents enroll in school.
- Providing transportation to medical appointments.
- Simply being present to listen to their stories.

Through accompaniment, we offer comfort, and spiritual and emotional support. It builds solidarity with immigrants and their families, and bridges understanding and mutual interest within communities.

Why Does the Church Believe in Accompaniment?

Accompaniment is a key concept in Catholic Social Teaching. It involves providing emotional, physical, and spiritual support to people in need and walking in their shoes, recognizing the human dignity and experience of every person.

It is helpful here to reflect on the Holy Father's 2018 migration day message, where he emphasized that "the Lord entrusts to the Church's motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search

of a better future.” He highlighted the importance of welcoming, supporting, protecting, and integrating immigrants as a high priority for the Church. These themes, when put into practice, are vital ways in which accompaniment becomes concrete.

Are there examples of accompaniment in the Bible?

The call to accompany and support immigrant is based on the rich heritage of Scripture and the Church's teaching. The patriarchs of the Church themselves were nomads who were settled by the hand of God in the time of Abraham. They soon migrated to Egypt, where they suffered oppression and were delivered once again by God's hand. From this experience comes a deep appreciation for the migrant journey as highlighted in the words of Scripture: "You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you, have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34). Jesus echoes this tradition when he proclaims, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). Throughout the years the Church has remained faithful to this call to care for and solidarity with immigrants of all kinds and has worked to respond accordingly.

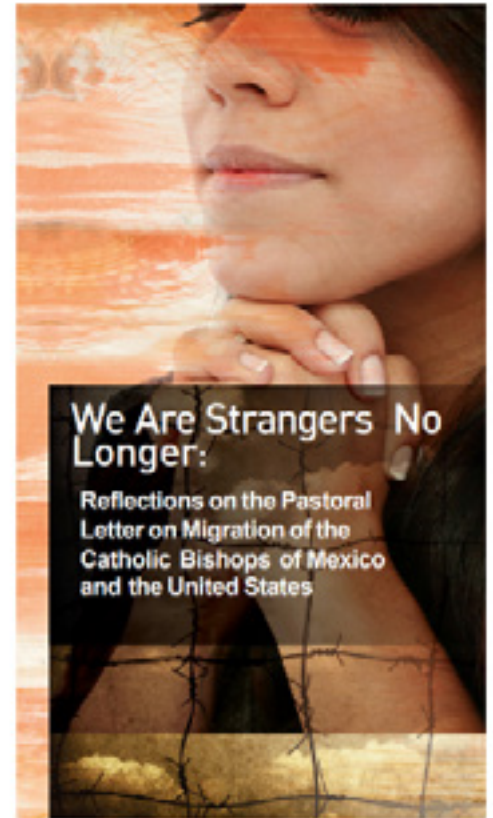


How can you help?

Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope

In 2003, the bishops of the United States and Mexico issued a joint pastoral letter, [Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope](#), that presented a Catholic framework for responding to the ongoing migration phenomenon in their respective countries. In doing so, the bishops offered pastoral guidance to Catholics who encounter and engage migrants living and working in their communities. The letter also suggested systematic reforms to U.S. immigration policy and presented an alternative to the existing immigration policy paradigm.

Please take an opportunity to read and reflect on the pastoral letter and recognize the continued importance that it has for the political and pastoral concerns of the Church today. An additional resource – [We are Strangers No Longer: Reflection on the Pastoral Letter on Migration \(sp\)](#) – provides an overview of some of the important themes in the letter and can help as you learn more about it. Please feel free to reach out to Todd Scribner at TScribner@uscgb.org should you have any questions, comments, or would like to share what you are doing on the migration issue in your local community.



Parishes Organized to Welcome Immigrants and Refugees

Launched in 2010, POWIR supports a selected set of diocesan resettlement programs each year to meet critical needs of newcomers. Since its inception, 52 MRS resettlement affiliates have participated in POWIR, making a difference in the lives of individuals and families from 50 countries. Since May 2021, From May 2021 to January 2023, the POWIR program has coordinated the work of 9,900 volunteers who have engaged in 109,000 volunteer hours and who have helped 23,899 clients.

POWIR dioceses equip parishes and community groups with skills to focus on long-term integration as an integral part of refugee and migration ministries, and include English as a second language learning, literacy acquisition, and job readiness programs. By offering welcome and hospitality in their parishes and communities, volunteers' lives are simultaneously enriched through meals shared and friendships formed. If you want to learn more about the POWIR program, volunteer at an existing POWIR site, or explore the possibility of forming a POWIR program in your diocese, please reach out to us at MR-SPOWIR@uscgb.org. To find out if there is a POWIR program in your area, please visit this [interactive map](#).

Volunteer at a local Catholic Charities

If you don't have a POWIR program in your local community, please be sure to check out where your [nearest Catholic Charities](#) is located. They do amazing work with migrants and refugees every day and could use your expertise and support as a volunteer.

