
PAPAL TEACHING AND MIGRATION

Exploring Common Themes in Papal Teaching on Migrants and Refugees



i Getty Images: MGallar



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Migration and
Refugee Services

Table of Contents

Overview.....	2
❖ Materials and Set up	2
❖ Prayer Intentions.....	3
1. Session One: The Holy Family.....	4
❖ Opening Prayer	4
❖ Introduction.....	4
❖ Scripture.....	5
❖ Reflection Questions	6
❖ World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion	6
❖ Closing Prayer.....	8
2. Session 2: Accompaniment	9
❖ Opening Prayer	9
❖ Introduction.....	9
❖ Scripture.....	10
❖ Reflection Questions	11
❖ World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion	12
❖ Closing Prayer.....	13
3. Session 3: Evangelization	14
❖ Opening Prayer	14
❖ Introduction.....	15
❖ Scripture.....	15
❖ Reflection Questions	16
❖ World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion	16
❖ Closing Prayer:.....	19
4. Session 4: Solidarity and Shared Responsibility.....	20
❖ Opening Prayer	20
❖ Introduction.....	20
❖ Scripture.....	21
❖ Reflection Questions	22
❖ World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion	22
❖ Closing Prayer.....	24



Papal Teaching and Migration: Exploring Common Themes in Papal Teaching on Migration

Overview

Since 1914, the Church has invited us to celebrate the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR), which provides an opportunity for Catholics to reflect on the situation confronting migrant populations, both internationally and domestically. This year, commemorating the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis has chosen the theme “God Walks with His People,” encouraging us to reflect on the role that the Church and we as the Body of Christ have in the accompaniment of migrants and refugees.

This study guide will provide an opportunity to consider several key themes that have consistently emerged in migration day messages during the pontificates of Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis, and emphasize the significant continuity across papacies on the issue of migration. The themes covered in this study guide include reflections on family, accompaniment, evangelization, and “solidarity and shared responsibility”. We suggest that discussion groups address one theme per session. Given the importance of the migration question to the Church, these study sessions can be conducted at any point during the year for small groups who are interested in learning more about this topic and how the Church approaches it.

Before each gathering, you are invited to read through the highlighted WDMR messages for that session, one from Pope Saint John Paul II, one from Pope Benedict XVI, and one from Pope Francis. Each week will include an opening prayer, scripture readings for reflection and discussion, guided questions for each Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, and a closing prayer. If you have time, you are encouraged to prayerfully read the “further reading” messages at the end of every section.

Materials and Set up

At least a week in advance, make the following materials available to participants:

- Try to define an agreed upon date and time for meetings that will be conducive to everyone’s schedule. It is viable to meet once a week for four weeks, on four consecutive days, or in some other structured sessions. If defined clearly in advance as to when you meet, you will ensure that more people will be present for each session.
- Provide links to respective World Day of Migrants and Refugees messages that will form the cornerstone for the discussion for that session
- Provide a copy of this group discussion guide, so that people will have an opportunity to review the questions for a given session and develop initial thoughts.
- In advance of each session, Arrange the chairs in a circle and set up a prayer space with an open Bible on a low table in the center of the circle.



- The questions provided in each section are meant only as a guide to discussion. Do not feel obligated to answer all of them, but only those that might be most beneficial to your specific group, or which might help to spur conversation.
- Be sure that during the session everyone has an opportunity to give their thoughts on the issues under discussion. It is not unusual for every group to have one or more people who talk a lot and others who are more reticent. Ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to share ideas will enrich the overall experience.
- At the beginning of each, it might be helpful to set the tone of the discussion by reflecting briefly on one or more of the following prayer intentions:

Prayer Intentions

- 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 bishops in our Church, that they 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 policy makers in our nation, that God grant them the wisdom to enact laws that provide greater protection for all migrant populations, 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.



1. Session One: The Holy Family

World Day of Migrants and Refugees Pre-Reading: Pope St. John Paul II – [1993](#), Pope Benedict XVI – [2007](#), Pope Francis – [2017](#)

Opening Prayer

Father, you entrusted to Saint Joseph what you held most precious: the child Jesus and his Mother, to protect them from the dangers and threats of the wicked.

Grant that we may experience his protection and help. May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.

Help them, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, to find the strength to persevere, give them comfort in sorrows and courage amid their trials.

Grant to those who welcome them some of the tender love of this just and wise father, who loved Jesus as a true son and sustained Mary at every step of the way.

May he, who earned his bread by the work of his hands, watch over those who have seen everything in life taken away and obtain for them the dignity of a job and the serenity of a home.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, whom Saint Joseph saved by fleeing to Egypt, and trusting in the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom he loved as a faithful husband in accordance with your will. Amen.

(Pope Francis, [2020 World Day of Migrants and Refugees message](#))

Introduction

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable (USCCB, [Call to Family, Community, and Participation](#)).

The first session centers on what the Church teaches to be “the first natural society”: the family. The family is the “Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society” ([Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) [CCC] 2207). Elsewhere, the Catechism remarks that family is an “institution [...] prior to any recognition by public authority, which has an obligation to recognize it” (CCC 2202).



As a community, we have a responsibility to protect and strengthen the family unit. While the best ways to achieve this may vary depending on practical considerations, strong and healthy family structures are essential to the well-being of society.

Migration situations, and particularly forced migration, often place a great deal of strain on families. It is thus critical that we discern how to address family unity when responding to migrants and refugees. We look to the Holy Family, forced to flee their land and seek safety from persecution by King Herod, to understand the reality of forced migration that migrant families often face, and some of the challenges that are a consequence of it.

Scripture

The following Scripture passages touch on the topic of discussion for this week. As time allows, it could be beneficial to read these passages aloud and reflect on how the idea of family is an important theme reflected in Scripture.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2: 18-24

26 Then God said: Let us make[♯] human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth. 27 God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female[♯] he created them. 28 God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.[♯] Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that crawl on the earth.^m

Matthew 2: 13-23

13 When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt,[♯] and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” 14 Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. 15 He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.” 16 When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. 17 Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: 18 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/2> “A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.” When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/2> 21 He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod,[♯] he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. 23 He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazorean.”



Romans 12:4-8

4 For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ² and individually parts of one another. 6 Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; 7 if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; 8 if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others,² with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Reflection Questions

- When you think of “family,” what or who comes to mind?
- What does it mean when the [Church says](#) that the family is the “domestic church” and the “first natural society?” (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church)
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that “[t]he family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society” (Catechism of the Catholic Church [2207](#)).
 - o What significance does the family unit have in society? Why does the family play such a significant role in the eyes of the state, the world, and the Church?
- In the Gospel reading, we heard of the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt. Jesus and His family fled to another land to seek protection and safety. Keeping this in mind, what does the Holy Family teach us about the unique challenges posed to migrant families?

World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion

In this section, we will look more closely at three World Day of Migrants and Refugee Messages through the theme of the Holy Family. After each selection, there will be questions to help us delve deeper into the theme in question.

Pope John Paul II (1993)

Migrants need specific pastoral attention from the ecclesial community, sensitive not only to their personal suffering but also to the negative repercussions that their difficult living conditions can have especially on their respective families. The migratory phenomenon, in fact, significantly affects family units.

It is certainly a positive fact that in the majority of countries the right of migrants to live with their families is recognized, and that many international institutions have reaffirmed it, underlining its relevance and value. It must be noted, however, that the recognition of this right often conflicts with obstacles of various kinds, which sometimes prevent its effective enjoyment. The State's duty is to ensure that immigrant families, taking into account their specific needs, do not lack what it ordinarily ensures for those of its own citizens.



Discussion Questions:

- In what ways does migration impact family units and why do states have the responsibility to ensure the “right of migrants to live with their families”? How do we see this threatened today?
- Why does Pope St. John Paul II put a strong emphasis on the suffering of the family, alongside the suffering of the individual person? In what ways is the family affected differently?

Pope Benedict XVI (2007)

In this misfortune experienced by the Family of Nazareth, obliged to take refuge in Egypt, we can catch a glimpse of the painful condition in which all migrants live, especially, refugees, exiles, evacuees, internally displaced persons, those who are persecuted. We can take a quick look at the difficulties that every migrant family lives through, the hardships and humiliations, the deprivation and fragility of millions and millions of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people. The Family of Nazareth reflects the image of God safeguarded in the heart of every human family, even if disfigured and weakened by emigration.

The migrant’s family meets many difficulties. The distance of its members from one another and unsuccessful reunification often result in breaking the original ties. New relationships are formed and new affections arise. Some migrants forget the past and their duties, as they are subjected to the hard trial of distance and solitude. If the immigrant family is not ensured of a real possibility of inclusion and participation, it is difficult to expect its harmonious development.

Everything must also be done to guarantee the rights and dignity of the families and to assure them housing facilities according to their needs. Refugees are asked to cultivate an open and positive attitude towards their receiving society and maintain an active willingness to accept offers to participate in building together an integrated community that would be a “common household” for all.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Benedict XVI draws our attention to the Gospel reading above from Matthew and says that “the Family of Nazareth reflects the image of God safeguarded in the heart of every human family, even if disfigured and weakened by emigration.” What does he mean by this?
- The protection of family unity is often threatened by migration, when children are separated from their parents or extended families separated by borders. Why is the principle of family unity so central to our faith and the role of the family?

Pope Francis (2017)

In these instances, the right of states to control migratory movement and to protect the common good of the nation must be seen in conjunction with the duty to resolve and regularize the situation of child migrants, fully respecting their dignity and seeking to meet their needs when they are alone, but also the needs of their parents, for the good of the entire family.



Above all else, there is the right to a healthy and secure family environment, where a child can grow under the guidance and example of a father and a mother; then there is the right and duty to receive adequate education, primarily in the family and also in the school, where children can grow as persons and agents of their own future and the future of their respective countries. Indeed, in many areas of the world, reading, writing and the most basic arithmetic is still the privilege of only a few. All children, furthermore, have the right to recreation; in a word, they have the right to be children.

- What does Pope Francis mean when he says that “there is the right to a healthy and secure family environment”? How does this speak to the unique needs of migrant families?
- Pope Francis draws specific attention to child migrants, not just by themselves but as a part of a family. Why must children be seen not just as children, but also as members of a family? How does this shape our understanding of the need for family unity?

Closing Discussion Questions

- How do Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis all speak to the theme for this week? Are there any continuities or discontinuities between each message?
- What new or unexpected understandings do we now have about the importance of the migrant family?
- How can we go out and work to uphold the dignity of families?

Closing Prayer

Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of families.

We are grateful for all the joy and love 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 spouse, 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.

[\(Prayer for Migrant Families, USCCB\)](#)



Further Reading: 1996 Pope Saint John Paul II, 2010 Pope Benedict XVI, 2018 Pope Francis, [Putting Children and Families First: A Challenge for Our Church, Nation and World](#) (USCCB)

2. Session 2: Accompaniment

World Day of Migrants and Refugees Pre-Reading: Pope Saint John Paul II – [2001](#), Pope Benedict XVI – [2013](#), Pope Francis – [2024](#)

Opening Prayer

God, Almighty Father,
we are your pilgrim Church
journeying towards the Kingdom of heaven.
We live in our homeland,
but as if we were foreigners.
Every foreign place is our home,
yet every native land is foreign to us.
Though we live on earth,
our true citizenship is in heaven.
Do not let us become possessive
of the portion of the world
you have given us as a temporary home.
Help us to keep walking,
together with our migrant brothers and sisters,
toward the eternal dwelling you have prepared for us.
Open our eyes and our hearts
so that every encounter with those in need
becomes an encounter with Jesus, your Son and our Lord.
Amen.

(World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2024)

Introduction

Our second session will examine the idea of accompaniment and the Church's role in the accompaniment of migrants.

“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” (USCCB Justice for Immigrants, [Accompaniment and the Catholic Church](#)).



In 1891, Pope Leo XIII wrote in *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor) and highlighted the role that the Church has in “[intervening] directly on behalf of the poor” and that, in order to achieve collective goals, “not only the Church, but all human agencies, must concur.” Pope Saint John Paul II tells us that the “Church feels in duty bound to speak out with the same courage on behalf of those who have no voice” (*Evangelium Vitae*). And in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis writes that “God’s presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives.” It is not enough to understand accompaniment as merely being physically present for someone but is rather being present and acting with someone for their good and the good of the community. Accompaniment is walking in the shoes of another and recognizing the inherent dignity and experience of every human person (*Justice for Immigrants, 2024*). We are called to be a source of accompaniment for those around us, particularly for those most in need around us.

In this section, we will look more closely at three World Day of Migrants and Refugee Messages through the theme of Accompaniment. After each selection, there will be questions to help us delve deeper into the theme in question.

Scripture

The following Scripture passages touch on the topic of discussion for this week. As time allows, it could be beneficial to read these passages aloud and reflect on how the issue of accompaniment is an important theme in Catholic thought and life.

Genesis 18:1-10

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. 2 Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/18> 3 he said: “Sir, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. 4 Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest under the tree. 5 Now that you have come to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.” “Very well,” they replied, “do as you have said.” 6 Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick, three measures^c of bran flour! Knead it and make bread.” 7 He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice calf, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. 8 Then he got some curds^c and milk, as well as the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them, waiting on them under the tree while they ate. 9 “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There in the tent,” he replied. 10 One of them^s said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.” Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, just behind him.



Luke 24:13–35

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles* from Jerusalem called Emmaus, 14 and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. 15 And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, 16 but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19 And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. 21 But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. 22 Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning 23 and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. 24 Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.” 25 And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer* these things and enter into his glory?” 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures. 28 As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. 29 But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30 And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. 31 With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. 32 Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” 33 So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them 34 who were saying, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” 35 Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Ephesians 2:14–18

14 For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, 15 abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, 18 for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Reflection Questions

- What does it mean to “accompany” someone? And what is an example you can point to of a time when you had to accompany somebody in your life?
- What is an example of how the Church accompanies people?



World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion

Pope [Saint John Paul II \(2001\)](#)

We move on from considering the faith that is in danger to more aptly considering the right of the emigrant, to the respect for one's cultural heritage even in pastoral care. From this perspective, the limit placed by Exsul Familia of giving pastoral assistance only up to the third generation no longer holds, and the right of migrants to receive assistance as long as real need continues to exist, is affirmed.

The comprehension of the human being, that the Church acquired in Christ, urges her to proclaim the fundamental human rights and to speak out when they are trampled upon. Thus, she does not grow tired of affirming and defending the dignity of the human person, highlighting the inalienable rights that originate from it. Specifically, these are the right to have one's own country, to live freely in one's own country, to live together with one's family, to have access to the goods necessary for a dignified life, to preserve and develop one's ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage, to publicly profess one's religion, to be recognized and treated in all circumstances according to one's dignity as a human being.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Saint John Paul II emphasizes the need for “pastoral care” for migrants. What does this look like at a practical level? How might we be called to either expand pastoral care or rethink pastoral care in our own parishes?
- Pope Saint John Paul II lays out the “inalienable rights” that originate from the Church's commitment to upholding the dignity of the human person. How have we seen these rights either uplifted or threatened by our societies? What responsibility do we have as members of the Body of Christ to ensure that this dignity is defended at all stages of life?

Pope [Benedict XVI \(2013\)](#)

Where migrants and refugees are concerned, the Church and her various agencies ought to avoid offering charitable services alone; they are also called to promote real integration in a society where all are active members and responsible for one another's welfare, generously offering a creative contribution and rightfully sharing in the same rights and duties.

The Church also works to highlight the positive aspects, the potential and the resources which migrations offer. Along these lines, programmes and centres of welcome have been established to help and sustain the full integration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into a new social and cultural context, without neglecting the religious dimension, fundamental for every person's life. Indeed, it is to this dimension that the Church, by virtue of the mission entrusted to her by Christ, must devote special attention and care: this is her most important and specific task.



Discussion Questions:

- Pope Benedict XVI writes that the Church and her agencies must not provide “charitable services alone,” but to also promote “real integration” that allows for individuals to contribute and rightfully share in the same rights and duties. What does “real integration” look like, and what does it not look like?
- Why does Pope Benedict XVI call the religious dimension of migrant integration the Church’s “most important and specific task?”

Pope Francis (2024)

Likewise, it is possible to see in the migrants of our time, as in those of every age, a living image of God’s people on their way to the eternal homeland. Their journeys of hope remind us that “our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20).

Every encounter along the way represents an opportunity to meet the Lord; it is an occasion charged with salvation, because Jesus is present in the sister or brother in need of our help. In this sense, the poor save us, because they enable us to encounter the face of the Lord (cf. [Message for the Third World Day of the Poor](#), 17 November 2019).

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Francis invites us to reflect with the passage from St. Paul’s letter to the Phillipians that says: “our citizenship is in heaven.” As we live in a world of states and borders, how does this challenge us to understand the need for accompaniment?
- What might Pope Francis mean when he says that “the poor enable us to encounter the face of the Lord”? How does this speak to our responsibility to accompany those in need?

Closing Discussion Questions

- How do Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis all speak to the theme for this week?
- What new or unexpected understandings do we now have about the importance of the accompaniment and our role in accompanying migrants and refugees?
- How can we go out and accompany migrants and refugees around us?

Closing Prayer

Loving God,

You continually call us to build the Kingdom of God .

May we be open and receptive to the call to accompany those among us seeking refuge and home. We pray that we, as members of the Body of Christ, may be instruments of welcome, love, and accompaniment for all those who are forced to leave their homelands. We ask for the grace of openness in our nation, in our homes, in our parishes, and in our hearts. Help us see your face in the face of every migrant, every refugee, and every person we encounter.



We also pray for those among us who are migrants and refugees, that they may know and believe that God not only walks with them but that He is also within them. May they experience this accompaniment at all parts of their journey to safety.

We ask this through the intercession of Our Lady, who is “a sign of sure hope and consolation to the faithful People of God as they continue their journey.”

Amen

Further Reading: 2002 Pope Saint John Paul II, 2006 Pope Benedict XVI, 2021 Pope Francis, [Justice for Immigrants 2024 National Migration Week](#)

3. Session 3: Evangelization

Pre-Reading: [1997 Pope Saint John Paul II](#), [2012 Pope Benedict XVI](#), [2015 Pope Francis](#)

Opening Prayer

Lord, make us bearers of hope,
so that where there is darkness,
your light may shine,
and where there is discouragement,
confidence in the future may be reborn.

Lord, make us instruments of your justice,
so that where there is exclusion, fraternity may flourish,
and where there is greed, a spirit of sharing may grow.

Lord, make us builders of your Kingdom,
together with migrants and refugees
and with all who dwell on the peripheries.

Lord, let us learn how beautiful it is
to live together as brothers and sisters. Amen.

(Prayer for [World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2022](#))

The New Evangelization calls each of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel. The focus of the New Evangelization calls all Catholics to be evangelized and then go forth to evangelize. In a special way, the New Evangelization is focused on 're-proposing the Gospel to those who have experienced a crisis of faith. Pope Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel "to those regions awaiting the first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but



who have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularization." The New Evangelization invites each Catholic to renew their relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church (USCCB, [New Evangelization](#)).

Introduction

If we are called to proclaim the Gospel and the Good News to all peoples, what does this look like in our response to migrants and refugees? As we put faith into action, we are called to “put into practice the word of the Lord, who came to proclaim deliverance from oppression” (Pope Benedict XVI, [Porta Fidei](#)). As we will see discussed in the following messages, Christianity spread in the early Church because of other Christians bringing the Gospel to all nations and evangelizing to peoples around the world. Today we are called to continue this evangelization not just to those outside of our lands, but also to those inside of them, to those arriving here through migration.

There is more to the story than our providing pastoral care to Catholic migrants who arrive on our shore. In [Redemptoris Missio](#), Pope Saint John Paul II highlights certain circumstances “where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization.” This reality has become increasingly common among western nations, including the United States, that have a long Christian pedigree. In such circumstances, we can also understand the New Evangelization as a process in which Catholic migrants who arrive in the United States can help to evangelize anew the native populations. Our obligation to provide pastoral care to migrants arriving on our shore is thus paired with the recognition that these same migrants are positioned to evangelize us, as they join us in communion here.

Scripture

The following Scripture passages touch on the topic of discussion for this week. As time allows, it could be beneficial to read these passages aloud and reflect on how the new evangelization is an important theme in Catholic thought and life today.

Exodus 19:3-6

Moses went up to the mountain of God. Then the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying: This is what you will say to the house of Jacob; tell the Israelites: 4 You have seen how I treated the Egyptians and how I bore you up on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now, if you obey me completely and keep my covenant,^s you will be my treasured possession among all peoples,^c though all the earth is mine. 6 You will be to me a kingdom of priests,^t a holy nation. That is what you must tell the Israelites.

Luke 4: 8-19

Jesus said to him in reply, “It is written: ‘You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.’” 9^t Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written: ‘He will command his angels



concerning you, to guard you,' 11 and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" 12 Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" 13 When the devil had finished every temptation,¹ he departed from him for a time. 14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread* throughout the whole region. 15 He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. 16 He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom² into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read 17 and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord."

1 Corinthians 9:14-18

In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel. 15 I have not used any of these rights, however, nor do I write this that it be done so in my case. I would rather die. Certainly no one is going to nullify my boast. 16 If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! 17 If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship. 18 What then is my recompense? That, when I preach, I offer the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Reflection Questions

- What does the "New Evangelization" look like in our day and age? What unique gifts and talents do we each possess to do this work?
- How can we see the New Evangelization not only as an opportunity to renew our own faith, but also as a way to share our faith with others?
- What responsibility do we each hold in the New Evangelization?

World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion

In this section, we will look more closely at three World Day of Migrants and Refugee Messages through the theme of the New Evangelization. After each selection, there will be questions to help us delve deeper into the theme in question.

[Pope Saint John Paul II 1997](#)

The task of proclaiming the word of God, entrusted by Jesus to the Church, has been interwoven with the history of Christian emigration from the very beginning. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, I recalled that "in the early centuries, Christianity spread because Christians, traveling to or settling in regions where Christ had not yet been proclaimed, bore courageous witness to their faith and founded the first communities there" (n. 82) [...] Many peoples came to know Christ through migrants who arrived from the lands evangelized in ancient times.



For her part, the Church, like the Good Samaritan, feels it her duty to be close to the illegal immigrant and refugee, contemporary icon of the despoiled traveler, beaten and abandoned on side of the road to Jericho (cf. Lk 10:30). She goes towards him, pouring "on his wounds the oil of consolation and the wine of hope" (Roman Missal, Common Preface VII), feeling herself called to be a living sign of Christ, who came that all might have life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). [...] In this way she acts in the spirit of Christ and follows in his steps, at the same time attending to the proclamation of the Good News and to solidarity towards others, elements which are intimately united in the Church's activity.

For the Christian, every activity has its beginning and its end in Christ: the baptized person acts, spurred by love for him, and knows that even the effectiveness of his actions springs from belonging to him: "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). In imitation of Jesus and the Apostles, who follow up the preaching of the kingdom by concrete signs of its fulfilment (Acts 1:1; Mk 6:30), the Christian evangelizes by words and deeds, both the fruit of faith in Christ. Actions, in fact, are his "active faith", while words are his "eloquent faith". Since there is no evangelization without, in consequence, charitable actions, there is no authentic charity without the spirit of the Gospel: they are two intimately linked aspects.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Saint John Paul II brings our attention to the missionary zeal of early Christians, writing that "Many peoples came to know Christ through migrants who arrived from the lands evangelized in ancient times." How can we learn from the Early Christians to understand the role of evangelization?
- Pope Saint John Paul II describes the work of evangelization through both actions, or "active faith", and through words, or "eloquent faith" and says that there is no evangelization without charitable actions. What does he mean by this? How are we challenged to live out evangelization through our actions?

Pope Benedict XVI 2012

The phenomenon of migration today is also a providential opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel in the contemporary world. Men and women from various regions of the earth who have not yet encountered Jesus Christ or know him only partially, ask to be received in countries with an ancient Christian tradition. It is necessary to find adequate ways for them to meet and to become acquainted with Jesus Christ and to experience the invaluable gift of salvation which, for everyone, is a source of "life in abundance" (cf. Jn 10:10); migrants themselves have a special role in this regard because they in turn can become "heralds of God's word and witnesses to the Risen Jesus, the hope of the world" (Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 105).

Pastoral workers – priests, religious and lay people – play a crucial role in the demanding itinerary of the new evangelization in the context of migration [...] For their part, the Churches of origin, of transit and those that welcome the migration flows should find ways to increase their cooperation for the benefit both of those



who depart and those who arrive, and, in any case, of those who, on their journey, stand in need of encountering the merciful face of Christ in the welcome given to one's neighbour.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Benedict XVI writes that “Men and women from various regions of the earth who have not yet encountered Jesus Christ or know him only partially, ask to be received in countries with an ancient Christian tradition.” What responsibility does that place on us, as Catholics, to respond to and welcome migrants and refugees? How are we called to do the work of Evangelization in our own lands?
- Pope Benedict XVI calls attention to the role of pastoral workers — priests, religious and lay people— in the work of the New Evangelization for migration. In what ways do these individuals have a special role in this work?

Pope Francis 2015

From the beginning, the Church has been a mother with a heart open to the whole world, and has been without borders. This mission has continued for two thousand years. But even in the first centuries, the missionary proclamation spoke of the universal motherhood of the Church, which was then developed in the writings of the Fathers and taken up by the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers spoke of *Ecclesia Mater* to explain the Church's nature. She begets sons and daughters and “takes them in and embraces them with her love and in her heart” ([Lumen Gentium](#), 14).

The multicultural character of society today, for that matter, encourages the Church to take on new commitments of solidarity, communion and evangelization. Migration movements, in fact, call us to deepen and strengthen the values needed to guarantee peaceful coexistence between persons and cultures. Achieving mere tolerance that respects diversity and ways of sharing between different backgrounds and cultures is not sufficient. This is precisely where the Church contributes to overcoming frontiers and encouraging the “moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization ... towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world” ([Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014](#)).

Discussion Questions:

- The mission of the Church has been “without borders” since its beginnings over two thousand years ago. How does this missionary spirit of our faith translate to the realities of migration today and both the work being done by faith communities and that which is still left to accomplish? What does the New Evangelization look like for us now, nearly two thousand years later?
- Pope Francis challenges us to strive for a culture of encounter, rather than simply a culture of tolerance. How do we see this in our world today? What does it mean to cultivate a culture of encounter, in practical terms?



Closing Discussion Questions

- How do Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis all speak to the theme for this week?
- What new or unexpected understandings do we now have about welcoming migrants and refugees through the lens of the New Evangelization?
- How can we go out and be examples of the New Evangelization?

Closing Prayer:

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?” – Romans 10:13-15

Heavenly Father,
pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire me with these words from Holy Scripture.

Stir in my soul the desire to renew my faith
and deepen my relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ
so that I might truly believe in and live the Good News.

Open my heart to hear the Gospel
and grant me the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others.

Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth
and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions.

In moments of hesitation, remind me:

- If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel?
- If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed?
- If not the truth of the Gospel, then what shall I proclaim?

God, our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit
I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith,
grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel
and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen. ([Prayer for the New Evangelization, USCCB](#))

Further Reading: 1999 Pope Saint John Paul II, 2013 Pope Benedict XVI, 2018 Pope Francis, [The New Evangelization and Social Justice](#) (USCCB)



4. Session 4: Solidarity and Shared Responsibility

Pre-Reading: [1996 Pope Saint John Paul II](#), [2013 Pope Benedict XVI](#), [2023 Pope Francis](#)

Opening Prayer

God, Father Almighty,
grant us the grace to work tirelessly
for justice, solidarity and peace,
so that all your children may enjoy
the freedom to choose whether to migrate or to stay.

Grant us the courage to denounce
all the horrors of our world,
and to combat every injustice
that mars the beauty of your children
and the harmony of our common home.

Sustain us by the power of your Spirit,
so that we can reflect your tender love
to every migrant whom you place in our path,
and to spread in hearts and in every situation
the culture of encounter and of care.

(Prayer for the [World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2023](#))

Introduction

In his encyclical [Fratelli Tutti](#), Pope Francis urges that solidarity is more than simply charitable acts, rather it “means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labor rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money... Solidarity, understood in its most profound meaning, is a way of making history, and this is what popular movements are doing.”

We turn to the Papal messages for this week with an eye to solidarity, community, and the responsibility to respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. Solidarity is more than just compassion, as Pope Saint John Paul II wrote, in many ways it is a call to stand up for those among us who need it most. We must always remember that “every man is his "brother's keeper", because God entrusts us to one another” ([Evangelium Vitae](#)).



Scripture

The following Scripture passages touch on the topic of discussion for this week. As time allows, it could be beneficial to read these passages aloud and reflect on how the issue of family is an important theme in Catholic thought and life.

Genesis 12:1-3

The LORD said to Abram: Go forth² from your land, your relatives, and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will find blessing in you.³

Matthew 25:35-36

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. 14 Now the body is not a single part, but many. 15 If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. 16 Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." 22 Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, 23 and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, 24 whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. 26 If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

Our final week will center on the theme of solidarity and shared responsibility.

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice." The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict (USCCB, [Solidarity](#)).



Reflection Questions

- How do these scripture passages connect with the themes we have discussed the past few weeks?
- What does “welcoming the stranger” look like in our daily lives?
- Pope Saint John Paul II wrote in [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis](#) that “[Solidarity] is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” What does it mean to be truly “responsible for all?”

World Day of Migrants and Refugees – Select Messages for discussion

In this section, we will look more closely at three World Day of Migrants and Refugee Messages through the theme of Solidarity & Shared Responsibility. After each selection, there will be questions to help us delve deeper into the theme in question.

[Pope Saint John Paul II 1996](#)

In the Church no one is a stranger, and the Church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere. As a sacrament of unity and thus a sign and a binding force for the whole human race, the Church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various Dioceses actively to ensure that these people, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community.

Solidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble. For Christians, the migrant is not merely an individual to be respected in accordance with the norms established by law, but a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility. “What have you done to your brother?” (cf. Gn 4:9). The answer should not be limited to what is imposed by law, but should be made in the manner of solidarity.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Saint John Paul II places responsibility on the Church, particularly at the local level, to cultivate and facilitate a sense of brotherhood amongst Christian communities. What does this look like in practical terms? In what ways is the local Church able to stand up and stand with migrants unique to those responses by the state?
- Pope Saint John Paul II says that “For Christians, the migrant is not merely an individual to be respected in accordance with the norms established by law, but a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility.” What does this mean in our world today and what sort of duty does this place upon the world? Upon the state? Upon us?



Pope Benedict XVI 2011

All, therefore, belong to one family, migrants and the local populations that welcome them, and all have the same right to enjoy the goods of the earth whose destination is universal, as the social doctrine of the Church teaches. It is here that solidarity and sharing are founded.

[I]n the case of those who are forced to migrate, solidarity is nourished by the "reserve" of love that is born from considering ourselves a single human family and, for the Catholic faithful, members of the Mystical Body of Christ: in fact we find ourselves depending on each other, all responsible for our brothers and sisters in humanity and, for those who believe, in the faith.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the Church's social doctrine urges us to remember that we are all members of "one family" and that, therefore, we all the "same right to enjoy the goods of the earth." How do we see nations and leaders uphold or fail to uphold this call? What does this call look like for us in our own lives? What challenges exist in carrying out this responsibility?
- As members of the "Mystical Body of Christ," we are called to be "responsible for our brother and sisters." [If one member of Christ's body suffers, all suffer, [1 Corinthians 12:12-26](#)]. What does Pope Benedict XVI mean by this? What does this passage reflect about the wider state of our world today?

Pope Francis 2023

Joint efforts are needed by individual countries and the international community to ensure that all enjoy the right not to be forced to emigrate, in other words, the chance to live in peace and with dignity in one's own country. This right has yet to be codified, but it is one of fundamental importance, and its protection must be seen as a shared responsibility on the part of all States with respect to a common good that transcends national borders.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me" (Mt 25:35-36). These words are a constant admonition to see in the migrant not simply a brother or sister in difficulty, but Christ himself, who knocks at our door.

Discussion Questions:

- Pope Francis calls attention to the shared responsibility of nations and the international community to respond to not just those that leave their countries, but also to ensure that individuals are able to remain in their own nations. What are the challenges to this work in our world today? What are some practical ways that we can advocate for and support this mission?
- As we reflect on the Gospel passage for this week, also discussed by Pope Francis, what does it mean to see "Christ himself" in the face of every migrant we encounter? What are we, therefore, called to do?



Closing Discussion Questions

- How do Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis all speak to the theme for this week?
- What new or unexpected understandings do we now have about the importance of shared responsibility and solidarity in responding to and welcoming refugees and migrants?
- How can we go out and be examples of Solidarity with migrants and refugees?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks for the blessing that your Kingdom is to us. We know and believe that every encounter with those around us is an opportunity to see Your face.

Let us always remember that, if one member of Christ's body suffers, all suffer.

Help us answer the call to stand in solidarity with our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters. We may ask for the grace of Your love and compassion to see You in everyone we meet. May Your abundant blessings be with those who welcome the stranger in Christ's name.

We also pray for our countries and our leaders, that they may work for peace, justice, and opportunity for all those who seek it. May they be guided by the Holy Spirit in their decision-making,

We ask all of this through the intercession of Our Lady Help of Christians, that she may accompany us and guide us in our work of solidarity.

Amen

Further Reading: 2003 Saint John Paul II, 2009 Pope Benedict XVI, 2014 Pope Francis, [Called to Global Solidarity International Challenges for U.S. Parishes](#) (USCCB)

Copyright © 2020, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All rights reserved. This text may be reproduced in whole or in part without alteration for nonprofit educational use, provided such reprints are not sold and include this notice. All quotes from Popes and Vatican sources, copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana (LEV), Vatican City. All rights reserved.

