

2026 World Day of Migrants and Refugees/National Migration Week



United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops



“EVEN JUST ONE OF THESE CHILDREN”

SEPTEMBER 21-27

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INTRODUCTION



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In a world marked by immense suffering, the migration situation stands out as a pressing global issue. The Vatican sponsored World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR) is an opportunity for the global church and the Catholic faithful to engage in prayer, reflection, and action on behalf of those who are forced to flee their homes. National Migration Week (NMW) is a uniquely US-based celebration that builds on the ideas promoted in WDMR, all be it applied according to an American context. In 2026 we celebrate National Migration Week September 21-27 and WDMR September 27.

The theme for both WDMR and NMW is “Even just one of these children,” which is a reference to Matthew 18:5: “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” In a statement released by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, they note that “with this choice, the Holy Father intends to express the Church’s concern for minors directly involved in migration, recalling the duty to welcome each one of them as the Gospel teaches us.” Although this not the first time a pope has focused on migrant children, this emphasis challenges us once again to focus intentionally on the particularly vulnerable situation that child migrants face and to consider how we can respond effectively to these challenges.

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 destination. Let this year’s WDMR/NMW be an opportunity to reflect on how we might do this more effectively.



ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING



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Trafficking violates each person's "inalienable right to freedom," as Pope Francis affirmed, and separates them from their families. Children are notably given a special place in the Gospel, reflected when Jesus rebukes the disciples for preventing children from coming to him (Mk. 10:13-16). The Vatican describes child trafficking as commodifying children by treating them as instruments of gain to be bought and sold, and notes that child victims are the most susceptible to long-term harm. It calls upon Catholics to increase awareness and to seek ways to partake in dioceses and local governments' efforts to reach survivors. The U.S. Catholic Church has undertaken various efforts to combat human trafficking, including education, organizational partnerships, public policy advocacy, and encouraging ethical business practices.

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000) established an internationally recognized definition of trafficking and requires ratifying countries to develop laws against it in line with the Protocol's provisions. The United States signed the Protocol in 2005 and has its own domestic protections in place. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), reauthorized several times since, was the first federal law to address human trafficking. Among other provisions, it created the "T visa," established an interagency task force to monitor and combat trafficking, and instituted shelters and other service programs for survivors.

Human trafficking is the use of force, fraud, or coercion to exploit someone for profit. Forms of exploitation notably include forced labor or recruitment into armed conflict, child marriage, and sexual exploitation. The most common forms of human trafficking include sexual exploitation (79 percent), followed by forced labor (18%). A 2024 UN report found that children account for more than one in three (38 percent) of detected trafficking victims globally.

Over the past 15 years, the proportion of children among detected trafficking victims has tripled. While child trafficking continues to be prevalent in low-income countries, recent data shows that it is also on the rise in high-income countries, particularly among girls trafficked for sexual exploitation. Traveling without the protection of a parent or guardian can also leave children more vulnerable to traffickers.



Child trafficking is prevalent in situations where adult care and oversight is limited, including children living in foster care or extended family, rather than parents, and children in households where poverty or inequality are present. The internet has become the primary medium for trafficking. In 2019, it was the primary method of solicitation used by buyers in 83.7 percent of U.S. sex trafficking cases.



There is considerable variation in trafficking trends by sex and region. Girls are mainly trafficked for sexual exploitation (about 60% of cases), while boys are mainly trafficked for forced labor and other purposes such as forced begging and criminality, with about 8% trafficked for sexual exploitation. Compared to adult trafficking victims, children are nearly twice as likely to suffer extreme violence, with even higher rates among girls. Trafficked children can suffer long-term physical, psychological, and emotional effects from trafficking, including trauma-related disorders, anxiety, depression, health and hygiene, or difficulties with successful integration into

adulthood. In North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean, children make up the majority of most trafficking victims. In Africa, armed conflict, climate change, and their resulting displacement increase children's vulnerability. In Central America, teenage girls trafficked for sexual exploitation are disproportionately affected. In East Asia, children (nearly 50 percent of victims) are most often exploited for labor or forced into marriage. In the United States, 57 percent of victims in new federal trafficking cases in 2021 were minors, most of them trafficked for sex. Traffickers do not always have evident criminal backgrounds. They may be employers, business owners, or family members. Some may have a familial relationship with the child by blood, marriage or adoption, while others may deliberately seek out a relationship with the child that they can later use as leverage for exploitation. Trafficking can also be buyer-perpetrated, where a child's vulnerabilities are exploited through offers of money, food, shelter, or basic needs.

Stereotypes surrounding what traffickers look like can actually hinder their identification. Traffickers are not always men, for instance. In 2022, women made up roughly 25 to 30 percent of those globally investigated, prosecuted, and convicted of trafficking. Trafficking also seldom resembles film depictions or people's pre-conceived notions of what it involves, such as kidnappings, physical force, and captivity. Only 5.3 percent of active U.S. federal sex trafficking cases, for example, involved cages, locked rooms, or barred cells. Most victims are instead psychologically coerced or manipulated, tactics that children are especially susceptible to. Language barriers and fear of traffickers and law enforcement are a few of the many reasons victims may hesitate to seek help. Taken together, the patterns show that child trafficking is rooted in exploiting children's vulnerabilities, and addressing it necessitates collaboration across individuals, families, communities, and governments.



ON STATELESS CHILDREN



A stateless person is not recognized as a citizen by any country. The latest estimates place the global stateless population at 4.5 million, with the true number believed to be much given that statelessness is inherently difficult to measure. Statelessness is concentrated across ten countries, which host 88 percent of the world's stateless population.

5 Children account for a disproportionate share (46 percent) of the global stateless population. Without a recognized nationality, children lack basic rights such as legal protection and access to healthcare and education, which are especially critical during their formative years. The UN warns that statelessness also renders children more vulnerable to lengthy detentions, family separation, and exploitation and abuse, such as human trafficking and recruitment into armed forces. At least 70,000 children each year are born into stateless situations with no means of acquiring any nationality.

The most common cause of statelessness is an inability by parents to register their child's birth and subsequently obtain for them identity documents, notably a birth certificate. This can occur through various mechanisms. For example, some countries grant nationality based on descent (*jus sanguinis*). Statelessness often occurs when a child is born in such a country to foreign parents who cannot pass on their own nationalities. Parents may be unable to confer their nationality for various reasons, including laws that strip individuals of their citizenship for living outside the country for an extended period of time; discriminatory nationality laws based on sex, race, or other, such as laws that prevent women from passing on citizenship; the creation of new States where ethnic, racial, and religious minorities might struggle proving their ties to the country; complex registration procedures with difficult requirements, and children's abandonment or separation from parents that results in a lack of identity documents that prove any one citizenship.



Two major international treaties serve as the basis for addressing statelessness. The Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) defined statelessness and outlined rights to be afforded to stateless people worldwide, including a right to education, housing, freedom of religion, etc., with all other rights matching those afforded to non-nationals. The Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961) targets child statelessness by obliging states to grant citizenship to children born either on their soil or abroad to their own nationals who would otherwise be stateless. As of 2025, however, only about 34 percent of countries had a legal framework broadly in line with the Convention, according to the UNHCR. At least 29 percent of all States also have no provision in their laws to grant nationality to children of unknown origin found in their territories.

The U.S. has not signed either Convention, but it maintains strong safeguards in place against statelessness. The 14th Amendment guarantees citizenship to anyone born on U.S. soil, regardless of their parents' citizenship or immigration status, and the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) permits children not born on U.S. soil to acquire citizenship at birth if at least one parent is a U.S. citizen who meets prior residency requirements.

The Church views statelessness as a threat to children's wellbeing and dignity. Legal recognition affirms a child's existence before the State and establishes a relationship where he or she is recognized as a rights-bearing individual entitled to the protections and support necessary to participate in society. Pope Francis declared that every child has a right to nationality at birth, and the Church cautions that the family unit is also weakened when children are left unprotected. The deprivation of citizenship harms children who had no control over the circumstances of their birth and alienates them from public life, which in turn results in spiritual harm. Stateless children's marginalization can separate them from the Church and the foundation for spiritual life it provides. Pope Francis described the neglect of a person's spiritual needs as the greatest discrimination, one which stateless children are directly exposed to. The Church's commitment to protecting children's dignity and wellbeing is reflected in its recognition of statelessness as a serious problem to be monitored and addressed.



ON REFUGEE CHILDREN



Refugees are individuals who are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin because they fear persecution, notably for reasons like race, religion, or political opinion. Unlike asylum-seekers, who are actively requesting protection, refugees have already been granted it. Refugee children are particularly vulnerable because they experience displacement during a critical stage of development, when they are also less able to care for themselves.

Most refugees flee for reasons like ethnic, tribal, and religious violence, and 69 percent of the world's refugees and other people in need of international protection come from just five countries. As of December 2025, there were 41.6 million refugees globally. Children make up roughly 39 percent of this population, despite accounting for only 29 percent of the world's population. Most refugee children are not unaccompanied but often arrive alongside their parents or legal guardians.

The UNHCR estimates that between 2018 and 2025, more than 2.4 million children were born as refugees, averaging about 338,000 children per year. Displacement is closer to a generation than a few seasons, meaning it affects many of refugee children's entire childhoods. This suggests the need for long-term, quality education. Yet, only 63 percent of refugee children attend primary school, and 24 percent secondary school, compared to 91 percent and 84 percent of children globally, respectively.

Refugee children often lack access to basic rights guaranteed under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including birth registration, education, and protection from abuse and exploitation. Without civil documentation proving their egalitarian identity, they can be denied school enrollment and healthcare access. In 2025, only 67% of refugee and asylum-seeking children under five had their births registered.



The 1951 Refugee Convention established a universal definition of “refugee,” the principle of non-refoulement, and minimum standards of treatment that ensured access to legal courts and work, among others. Its 1967 Protocol extended these protections to all people in need of international protection, as opposed to only those fleeing events before 1951. Nonetheless, the UNHCR reports that as of 2025, only about 40 percent of countries had a legal framework in line with the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 protocol.

The United States signed the 1967 protocol and historically run the largest resettlement program in the world. The Refugee Act of 1980 established formal procedures to seek asylum in the U.S. and amended the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), eliminating the national origins quota system and aligning the definition of refugee, persecution, and well-founded fear of persecution with the UN 1951 Convention and its 1967 protocol. Presently, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides services like healthcare, employment assistance, and school enrollment support to refugee families and children.

Refugee resettlement policy in the U.S. has varied considerably across presidential administrations. The Biden administration set the refugee admissions ceiling at 125,000, the highest since 1994. In 2026, the Trump administration set it at 7,500, the lowest in the program’s history. Lower ceilings reduce resettlement opportunities for vulnerable children, even those already identified by the UNHCR as needing protection. A 2023 report found that out of 1.5 million refugees in need of resettlement worldwide, only 7 percent were resettled.

The Church has long recognized an obligation to advocate and care for children’s physical and emotional wellbeing. Beyond that, it recognizes that displacement disrupts family life and separates children from the communities. Saint Pope John Paul II emphasized this responsibility, stating, *“The Church is ever mindful that Jesus Christ himself was a refugee, that as a child he had to flee with his parents from his native land in order to escape persecution. In every age therefore the Church feels herself called to help refugees.”*



ON UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN



An unaccompanied child (UC) is defined by the United Nations (UN) as a minor who is separated from his or her parents or other relatives and is not under the care of any adult who is legally or customarily responsible for them. This differs from a separated child, a minor separated from his or her parents but not necessarily other family members. The Church expresses particular concern for children who find themselves fully alone, and while the precise number of unaccompanied children is unknown, population estimates are in the hundreds of thousands.

Children may find themselves unaccompanied after separation from their guardians along migration routes or after being sent ahead alone to avoid danger, among other reasons. Unaccompanied children are more vulnerable to exploitation, including human trafficking, aggravated smuggling, and forced labor and marriage. Furthermore, when they arrive at their destinations, they often lack access to education, healthcare, and other essential services, and find it hard to adapt to their new communities. Given that this term describes the legal state of a child as opposed to their reason for migrating, unaccompanied children arrive at their destinations in the context of various migration movements, whether fleeing war, seeking economic opportunities, or otherwise.

Regional variations in how unaccompanied children are defined and deficient population estimates render it difficult to identify trends for this demographic. Such population estimates are primarily determined by filed asylum applications; however, given inaccuracies in age assessments at borders, the fact that UCs do not always file for asylum, and a common lack of identity documents by minors, the numbers are likely to be underestimated. Proper screening systems capable of identifying unaccompanied children, along with clear legal definitions, are vital to ensure unaccompanied children's needs are met, both in policy and in practice.



In 1989, the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) required nations to respect and protect the rights of all minors within their territories, regardless of their background or immigration status. It outlined numerous protections, including access to legal representation and asylum procedures, non-refoulement, and the “best interests of the child” principle, which requires governments to prioritize the child’s safety and wellbeing above all other competing interests. These protections prove especially important for unaccompanied minors.

While the convention is binding for ratifying nations, enforcement is limited. Governments must report on their implementation of the Convention only every five years, and the primary means of enforcement by the UN are monitoring and providing recommendations rather than direct enforcement. The United States is the only nation to have signed the treaty without ratifying it, but it has numerous domestic protections for unaccompanied children in place. The Flores Settlement Agreement (1997) established national standards regarding the treatment of minors in immigration custody, requiring children to be held in the “least restrictive setting” possible and imposing limits on the length of their detention. The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), first enacted in 2000 and subsequently reauthorized multiple times, and the Homeland Security Act, passed in 2002, increased the provision of care and services for all unaccompanied children referred to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR).

Unaccompanied children in the United States still face various challenges. The CRC upholds the importance of access to legal assistance. However, research finds that almost half of unaccompanied children’s cases on which a decision is reached end in a deportation order or voluntary departure, often back to dangerous circumstances. Data from interviews with unaccompanied children by the UN found that 58% of the 404 children interviewed were forcibly displaced because they confronted harms that indicated an “actual or potential need” for international protection. Moreover, only fifty-one percent of unaccompanied children in the U.S. were represented by an immigration attorney at any given time during their legal proceedings, a factor highly influential in case decisions.

Throughout the 2010s, the UNHCR observed an upward trend in the number of unaccompanied children arriving at international borders, particularly from regions experiencing violence, insecurity, and instability. UNICEF reported that there were at least 300,000 unaccompanied and separated children recorded in about 80 countries in 2015 and 2016, an estimated fivefold increase from 2010. Recent data further warrants concern. In 2022, about 67 percent of roughly 35,200 children who arrived in southern European countries were unaccompanied or separated.

The Church's concern for unaccompanied children emerges from its broader concern for the most vulnerable and social teaching on family unity. A commitment to family unity necessitates that governments prioritize reuniting children with their families or legal guardians. In his message for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis emphasized the need to care for unaccompanied children, especially those “who are alone” and for the young people “forced to live far from their homeland and separated from their families.”



Migration & Catholic Social Teaching

Key Principles Derived from the Magisterial Teaching of the Catholic Church

- Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland (i.e., the right not to migrate).
- When the conditions necessary for a dignified life are absent, persons have the natural right to migrate to support themselves and their family.
- More prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome those in search of the security and means of livelihood unavailable in their country of origin.
- Countries have the right to maintain their borders and regulate immigration, consistent with the common good and with respect for the sanctity of human life.
- Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.
- The God-given dignity and rights of undocumented immigrants should be respected.
- Immigrants have a responsibility to respect the country that receives them.

Irregular Migration and Immigration Enforcement

- Pope Francis has [stated](#) that “safe, orderly, regular, and sustainable migration is in the interest of all countries.” At the same time, Catholic teaching [recognizes](#) that it “is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop.” Threats to human life, therefore, may compel irregular migration. Above all, we must reject an oversimplification of the issue that disregards the human lives involved. One of the main differences between immigrating to the United States today and immigrating to the United States 100 years ago is that the process has become much more complicated and limiting, meaning most who immigrated during the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries could not do so today.
- Immigration enforcement should always
- be targeted, proportionate, and humane. According to its nature (i.e., the crossing of international boundaries) and the U.S. Constitution, it is principally and necessarily the responsibility of the federal government to regulate immigration and provide orderly processes for people seeking to immigrate to the United States. However, national, state, and local governments must work collaboratively with one another and civil society to devise a collective and humane response to migration.



Immigration Reform

- As recognized by the Church for decades, the current immigration system is inadequate to address the needs of American families, employers, and communities, as well as immigrants themselves. Reforms and investments are needed to modernize/increase capacity at ports of entry, increase the number of/access to lawful immigration pathways, and establish earned legalization programs for long-time undocumented residents.
- The situation at the U.S.-Mexico border is unsustainable for migrants and communities alike, but it can and should be addressed without sacrificing longstanding, life-saving humanitarian protections, such as asylum. Ultimately, no sustainable reduction in migration can be achieved without a long-term commitment to addressing its root causes. Looking only at the U.S.-Mexico border or the domestic situation ignores the realities people face in their countries of origin. Heavy-handed enforcement measures will not alleviate forced migration. Much more attention should be given to the myriad causes of increased migration, rather than simply responding to its symptoms. In his most recent encyclical, Pope Leo [emphasized](#) that it is critical to protect “the [rightful hopes](#) of those forced to leave by ensuring safe and legal routes, dignified conditions for receiving them, and genuine pathways to integration. On the other hand, it means promoting the right to remain in one’s homeland in peace and security by addressing the root causes that force people to migrate, including those linked to economic injustices and the climate crisis.”

Additional Resources

- [Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2241](#) (USCCB).
- [Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope](#) (USCCB)
- [Q&A on Catholic Ministries Serving Migrants and Refugees](#) (USCCB)
- [Human Trafficking, U.S. Policy, and the Catholic Church](#) (USCCB)
- [Justice for Immigrants](#) (USCCB)
- [Responding to Migrants and Refugees: Twenty Action Points](#) (Holy See)
- [Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking](#) (Holy See)
- [And They Shall Know Us by Our Love](#) (Catholic Charities USA)
- [Modern Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration: Notable Quotes](#) (CLINIC)



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JANUARY 2025

Catholic Elements of Immigration Reform

“What is clearly true, and what the Church and many others have called for, is the urgent need for a comprehensive reform of our country’s immigration system. The U.S. immigration system is overly complex and unjust, often keeping family members apart; it must be fixed.”

—Statement of the USCCB Administrative Committee (March 17, 2022)

For decades, the Catholic bishops of the United States have been consistent and steadfast in their calls for a just reform of the nation’s immigration system. The elements of reform articulated below are grounded in [Catholic social teaching generally](#) and the [Church’s teaching on migration specifically](#), including the joint pastoral letter released by the American and Mexican bishops, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* (2003).

Element 1: Enforcement efforts should be targeted, proportional, and humane

Safeguarding American communities and upholding the rule of law are laudable goals. At the same time, a country’s rights to regulate its borders and enforce its immigration laws must be balanced with its responsibilities to uphold the sanctity of human life, respect the God-given dignity of all persons, and enact policies that further the common good. Whether along an international border or in the interior of the country, enforcement measures should focus on those who present genuine risks and dangers to society, particularly efforts to reduce gang activity, stem the flow of drugs, and end human trafficking. Just enforcement also requires limiting the use of detention, especially for families, children, pregnant women, the sick, elderly, and disabled, given its proven harms and the pervasive lack of appropriate care in detention settings. Military personnel, resources, and tactics should not be used in immigration enforcement. Deportations and other enforcement actions should always be carried out with due regard for families, community ties, and religious liberty interests.

Element 2: Humanitarian protections and due process should be ensured

From refugee resettlement, asylum, and temporary protected status, to visas for victims of trafficking and abused youth, humanitarian protections are essential components of an immigration system that furthers the common good. Reforms to the U.S. asylum system in particular should not raise what is already a high bar for relief, given the potential threats to human life if refoulement were to occur. Meanwhile, third-country resettlement is a durable and mutually beneficial solution for refugees who cannot safely return to their country of origin. Immigration processes, whether affirmative or defensive, must also be subject to due process. The dehumanization or vilification of noncitizens as a means to deprive them of protection under the law is not only contrary to the rule of law but an affront to God himself, who has created them in his own image. Further restricting access to humanitarian protections will only endanger those who are most vulnerable and deserving of relief.

Element 3: Long-time residents should have an earned pathway to citizenship

History does not support the belief that opportunities for long-time undocumented residents to regularize their status significantly increases illegal immigration. Today, nearly 12 million people are estimated to be living in the United States without legal status. This number has remained between 10 and 12 million since 2005. Almost one-third of the undocumented population consists of those brought to the United States as children, commonly known as “Dreamers”. It also includes approximately 300,000 farmworkers, about half of the U.S. agricultural workforce. A significant majority of the undocumented population has lived in the United States for over a decade (some estimates place this percentage at upwards of 80%). Meanwhile, the population already contributes an estimated \$100 billion in federal, state, and local taxes each year. Providing legal processes for long-time residents and other undocumented immigrants to regularize their status would strengthen the American economy, provide stability to communities, and keep families together.

Element 4: Family unity should remain a cornerstone of the U.S. system

Catholic teaching maintains that families are the foundation of society, and the success of any civilization hinges on the well-being of its families. For generations, families living in the United States have included combinations of citizens and noncitizens. Immigration reform measures should be evaluated according to whether they strengthen families and promote family unity. U.S. citizen members of mixed-status families should not be penalized with restrictive policies that require eligibility for programs or services to hinge on an entire family being comprised of citizens.

Element 5: Legal pathways should be expanded, reliable, and efficient

An enforcement-only approach to immigration disregards the benefits of immigration and the contributions of immigrants, as well as the many legitimate motivations people have for migrating, including family reunification, educational opportunities, employment, and humanitarian needs. Meanwhile, limits on legal immigration pathways established several decades ago are no longer responsive to the social, economic, and geopolitical realities of today. Unreliable processes and inadequate legal pathways have merely contributed to an increase in irregular migration, even as enforcement efforts have been steadily intensified. Improving and increasing opportunities for people to lawfully enter the United States, on both a temporary and permanent basis, are necessary steps to address several pressing issues, from family separation to regional labor shortages. New legal pathways should be created, and backlogs resulting in decades-long wait times should be eliminated.

Element 6: The root causes of forced migration should be addressed

Migration has been a consistent phenomenon throughout human history. The Bible itself depicts a series of migrations, including that of the Holy Family fleeing persecution. An effective and sustainable response to increased migration must include efforts to address its root causes, especially in the case of forced migration. The preeminent right to life provides that people should be able to flourish in their homeland, with migration being a free choice (known in Catholic teaching as the right not to migrate). However, when the conditions for a dignified life are absent, people have the natural right to migrate, and countries have a duty to accommodate that right to the extent possible. There are a multitude of factors causing people around the world to migrate in large numbers today, often as the only way to sustain or protect human life. This cannot be addressed unilaterally (i.e., a domestic overemphasis on deterrence) or by shifting responsibility (i.e., externalization of borders) but requires meaningful cooperation between the United States and other countries.



PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

GENERAL PETITIONS

On Slavery

For Pope Leo, that our Heavenly Father may gift him with deep wisdom as he calls the Church to struggle against the evil of human trafficking, we pray to the Lord,

For all bishops in the Church, that they continue to be leaders in the fight against modern day slavery, both domestically and abroad, we pray to the Lord,

For our priests and deacons, that they may boldly proclaim Church teaching on human dignity and the Church's teaching on human trafficking, we pray to the Lord,

For our religious brother and sisters and all the lay faithful, that God inspire them with the continued commitment to fight the evil of human trafficking, we pray to the Lord,

For everyone who is trapped in a situation of slavery, that God will help to liberate them from their chains, we pray to the Lord,

For perpetrators of slavery, that they repent of their evil ways and turn to God for forgiveness, we pray to the Lord,

On Migration

For all bishops in our Church, that he 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 take action in their local communities to support and protect migrants and to advocate on their behalf, we pray to the Lord,

For unaccompanied migrant children, that God protect them on their journey and safely reunite them with their families, 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 migrant workers, that they may labor in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide, 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,

On Refugees

For the bishops, that they will continue in their commitment to refugee resettlement and provide in their communities a place of welcome, we pray to the Lord,

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

For refugees in Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere who are experiencing great suffering, that God might bring them to a place of peace and safety, we pray to the Lord,

Government Officials

For the President of the United States and all government leaders: that they continue to work tirelessly to end the bane of slavery that continues to exist in our communities, we pray to the Lord,

For the President of the United States and all government leaders: that the Son of God, who became human, will help them understand the great dignity of human persons, and support legislation that better protects vulnerable populations in our midst, 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,



Sample Handout for Marketing WDMR

World Day of Migrants and Refugees: “Even just one of these children”



GETTY/CLOVERPHOTO

The Vatican sponsored World Day of Migrants and Refugees takes place every year on the last Sunday of September. In 2026 it is on September 27th. National Migration Week precedes the World Day (September 21-27). Both celebrations provides an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the intersection between migration and Catholic thought. For this year, Pope Leo XIV chose “Even just one of these children” as the primary theme for the World Day, which is a reference to Matthew 18:5: “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” It challenges each of us to reflect more closely on the often dire situations that drive children to migrate, often alone, in search of a safe haven. What can we do to ensure that child migrants are not exploited but receive the care that they deserve? What steps can we take in our local community to welcome migrants and help them become more fully integrated in their new home? To learn more about Church teaching on migration, please visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org.



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