

## COMMUNITY PRAYER FOR INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE DAY 2020 June 2020

### INTRODUCTION

This “*Community Prayer*” could be shared with our Partners in the Mission, the Associates and friends of the Community. Besides the person leading the Prayer, other 2 Readers, OR MORE, are invited to alternate with the person leading the Prayer.

### Reader n.1

*“Today is International Migrants Day, a day to remember these individuals and reiterate the need to respect the rights and dignity of all. It is a day set aside by the United Nations to recognize the estimated 272 million migrants that are integral members of all our societies today.”*

Reader continues.... We, as a Good Shepherd Family around the world, want to pray, reflecting on today’s theme, with four moments according to Saint John Eudes’ way of praying. Let us take a moment to reflect on today’s theme.

#### 1. Time to reflect on the theme

It seems most appropriate that the “United Nations” remind the world of our brothers and sisters - **3.5% of the world population** - who are seeking their rights to live “humanly” as the rest of the world and too often, never achieve their goal. Today **migration** calls for new and updated solutions founded on global justice with all the implications it implies: economic, political, social, cultural and ethical.

**On September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 105<sup>th</sup> World Day of the Migrant and Refugee, Pope Francis**, during the Angelus, pointing at a brand-new monument in St Peter’s Square, announced:

*“I wanted this bronze statue, representing a raft, as a reminder to all, of the evangelic challenge of welcome.”*



**Pope Francis presenting the Statue of the Canadian Artist, Timothy Schmaltz, St Peter’s Square Rome, 29.09.2019**

On February 2, **2020**, Pope Francis courageously deplored all the inhuman and outrageous situations in which our brothers and sisters find themselves trapped without any mercy. “*Poor migrants, brothers and sisters, victims of criminal human smuggling and human trafficking! ... It’s blood money! We pray that the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, be heard and considered.*”

**Reader n. 2, (after a short pause, continues:)**

The United Nations Report 2020 states that *global displacement is at a record high*, with the number of *internally displaced at over 41 million* and the number of *refugees at nearly 26 million*.

These migrants, moving from their countries of origin to the “unknown” find themselves - caught in a crisis that threatens their security and ability to thrive - are of growing concern to the international community. Moreover, the World Report highlights a growing phenomenon:

*“Child migration is a significant contemporary phenomenon. It is likely to increase in both scale and salience as the mobility of young people grows, a result of more affordable travel, climate change, growing technology-mediated connectivity and increasing global inequality in the distribution of opportunity, security and access to employment.”*

In our PRAYER TODAY we want to focus, more emphatically, on this “*contemporary phenomenon*”, of the **unaccompanied minors and child migrants/refugees**. Many of our Good Shepherd Ministries are oriented towards the “**Holy Innocents**” of our times and particularly so, at the heart of the Mediterranean Sea. In April 2020 many other hundreds drowned with their mothers in S.E. Asia.

Sad to say, the latest international political decisions have produced very serious effects in terms of violations of the rights and social exclusion of asylum seekers and protection holders, to the detriment of welcome and integration.

**A PAUSE with soft music**

**Leader:** Let us start our PRAYER by invoking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and move us into action, just as St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia would have done.

A moment of **ADORATION:** (*I adore the human face of the love of God full of compassion.*)

**1<sup>st</sup> Reader:**

Brother Jesus,

From the very start of your life, immediately after your birth, your parents had to flee to Egypt because your life was at stake.

You spent your whole life in a country that was occupied by a foreign power.

And you travelled on foot, from North to South, you walked incessantly, all the way in foreign territory. – **Pause** –

*(“What we need is to help these people to remain on their homeland! But by blocking their entry in Europe, the “old Continent” loses its humanistic tradition, the very essence of her well-being.” (Treaty of Hamburg) – How do our countries’ policies exclude our brothers and sisters?)*

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reader:** A moment of **THANKSGIVING:** (*I am thankful for God's constant presence in our midst*)

Brother Jesus,  
I contemplate on you as you walk the roads of Palestine, empty-handed, no luggage, with nowhere to rest your head.  
I thank you for wanting to share our human state.  
You loved us to the point of taking on the state of a servant.  
I give you thanks for the gift of your life, which you totally gave unto death. – **Pause**

*(“Nobody is a stranger! Who is responsible of their blood? We all say: “It is not I! We are all indifferent! Globalization has robbed us of our ability to cry!” (Pope Francis, Bari, Italy: 2019)*

A moment of **ASKING FORGIVENESS** (*I come to you with an open heart: my fears, my weaknesses, my hurts*)

**3<sup>rd</sup> Reader:**

Brother Jesus,  
Forgive us for our indifference, for our insensitivity,  
for our lack of audacity in dealing with the tragedy of migrants.  
Often, we remain unresponsive, afraid of taking risks,  
afraid of being disturbed and shifted from our comfort zone. – **Pause**

*(Faith is a Nigerian woman who managed to escape from Libya and is now in Europe with a Refugee Status. She witnesses: “I was only 18 years old and lived one year as a prisoner; I suffered sickness, violence, hunger, without water...at times I thought of suicide...”)*

A moment of **SELF-OFFERING:** (I give myself anew to Jesus)

**4<sup>th</sup> Reader:**

Brother Jesus,  
I give myself to you that I may look with your eyes, love others with your heart,  
and that I may become your hands at the service of so many migrants, who are none but my brothers and sisters. – **Pause**

*(The Count de Neuville once told Mary Euphrasia:” **You are consecrated to the salvation of the unfortunate who are shipwrecked and not to the instruction of the young sailors.**”) (Our Heritage, Vol. II, p.45) Metaphorically then.... prophetically so, today!*

**A Reader, time permitting, could share the story here below followed by silence and some time so that the participants may express other spontaneous prayers:**

### **DROWNED, NAMELESS**

*“The death of a child found in a carrier of an airplane flying from Ivory Coast to Paris is enormous pain that can leave nobody indifferent.”*

Newspaper, 8th January 2020

**The fourteen-year-old boy who drowned had left Abidjan to go to Belgium where he wanted to study. In his jacket-pocket, was found a school-record:**

*“It was hidden where the most cherished things are kept, carefully folded and sewn inside the jacket: a school report card, with the grades of the subjects written in Arabic and French. That report card, held with love and pride, perhaps even in the hope that it would show his good intentions, is all we know about its owner, a fourteen-year-old boy who died in the Mediterranean without anyone bereaving him.”*

**Let us hear once more Pope Francis:**

Last **February 19-23, 2020** from Bari, the Italian city overlooking the East, Pope Francis recalled how this **Mediterranean Sea**, called “**Mare Nostrum**” is historically known as a “**Frontier of Peace**”. And yet, **4,700** drowned here in **2016** and since then many more under our own eyes. In **2019** an estimate number of **1,845** were reported missing in the sea.

*“No to indifference and rejection”* exhorts Pope Francis; *“protect the minorities and freedom of religion: this is the only Christian extremism.”!*

### **Leader**

Do these tragedies and inhumanities recall anything similarly painful in our lives: war, conflicts, etc. and we felt totally helpless?

And yet, God, you told us, “***I am always with you!***” On the boat, during the storm, You, Jesus, you rebuked the apostles calling them, “*Men of little faith!*”

In the year A.D. 60, Saint Paul was shipwrecked in Malta after a long troubled-sea voyage from Jerusalem to Rome (*where he wanted to present his cause to Caesar*). He and the 275 (prisoners and crew) were all saved in spite of the horrible shipwreck, tossed by the sea against the rocks. They were rescued and helped by the Islanders. They remained on the Island for three months waiting for another big ship before proceeding with their voyage. St Paul leaves his witness in the **ACTS of the Apostles, Chap.28** where he says:” And “***the inhabitants treated us with unusual kindness***” and ***when another ship arrived from Alexandria, “they honoured us with many marks of respect and put on board the provisions needed”***. (Acts, 28:1-10)

### **TIME FOR SPONTANEOUS PRAYERS**

Brother Jesus, you who reproached the Apostles for lack of faith and promised to be with us until the end of times, give us the courage to seek ways and means of offering a helping hand to our brothers and sisters who seek their right to live with dignity and respect. May the Sea,

called the” **Cemetery of the Mediterranean**” become the stepping-stone to a better life to all those who are fleeing from cruelty, poverty and trafficking....

- May they find welcoming hearts to start anew particularly those young boys and girls who are yearning for a dignified future.....
- Inspire all those who have the power to assist migrants and refugees, to do it with a willing and generous heart....
- Give the courage to world leaders to do ALL they can for our brothers and sisters seeking their right: a dignified life.
- *[Other]*
- Saint Mary Euphrasia, pray for us!
- Saint John Eudes, pray for us!
- Blessed Maria Aguchita inspire us as we reflect on our mission and the action to take, you who never spared neither difficulty nor sacrifice to lift the “sinking” neighbor with kindness and love.

OUR FATHER .. A Hymn or song to match with this specific theme.

Prayer prepared by Annunciata Gatt (Province of Italy-Malta)

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## APPENDIX (Stories from Italy-Malta)



One of our many **Unaccompanied Minors Refugees** saved from the hardships endured in Lybia while awaiting embarkment to Europe. Arriving in Sicily and Malta, many are welcomed in our *Centres of the Good Shepherd*, after all requirements are seen to. They study the language and follow professional courses.

A young lad in Palermo, Sicily, showing, with great satisfaction, his professional achievement.

These boys at the Good Shepherd Refugees Centre in Malta, are happily celebrating a birthday party... a good moment to forget all the hardships endured both at their homeland and on the sea.

