

MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES¹

“I have seen the oppression of my people, I have heard the clamor announced by their oppressors and I know their anguish” (Exodus 12: 37-38-42)

SETTING:

Each Community, according to its resources, tastes or the location where they will pray, prepares the environment with images and/or objects that evoke the conditions experienced by refugees and migrants.

We are going to pay a prayerful tribute to the courage and resistance of millions of people in the world who have been forced to flee their lands, or have been expelled because of wars, persecution, violence, dispossession of their territories, abuse of their cultures, destruction of the environment, etc. . . .

Sing an appropriate hymn from your local tradition, or recite Psalm 5, repeating the following antiphon:

GOD LISTEN TO MY WORDS, ATTEND TO MY GROANS, PAY ATTENTION TO MY CRIES FOR HELP, MY GOD!

Each participant brings to mind, in a moment of silence, then shares, the situation of people who are emigrating from their own countries, or from other countries (close or distant) of which they have knowledge. . . . (Silence).

Brief dialogue on what we know about who refugees and migrants are.

A time for learning and information:

Refugees: "According to the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it "..²

Migrants: "are those who decide to move to another country, not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives, find work or education, for family reunification, or for other reasons." (*Semana Magazine*, March 2016).

¹ REFUGEES: Held for the first time in 2001, on June 20 of each year, World Refugee Day is celebrated. MIGRANTS: The celebration of International Migrants Day, declared by the General Assembly in 1999, seeks to recognize the great contribution - often ignored - that millions of migrants make to the economy and development of countries around the world, and at the same time review the challenges that migration presents for the future.

² UNHCR – The 1951 Refugee Convention: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10>



From the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis, “LAUDATO SI” Paragraphs 25, 26

“There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation. They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. Sadly, there is widespread indifference to such suffering, which is even now taking place throughout our world. Our lack of response to these tragedies involving our brothers and sisters points to the loss of that sense of responsibility for our fellow men and women upon which all civil society is founded.

Many of those who possess more resources and economic or political power seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms, simply making efforts to reduce some of the negative impacts of climate change. However, many of these symptoms indicate that such effects will continue to worsen if we continue with current models of production and consumption.”

Can I help other people to become aware of this painful reality?

Besides praying, what can I do for migrants personally or as a community?

We pray for those leaders, ideologies, and social groups that cause this pain for their fellow human beings, that borders are broken down, corruption is overcome, and diversity based on justice, the value of life in all its forms, dignity, and the centrality of the person is welcomed, with the recognition, guarantee and reparation, when necessary, of individual and collective rights.

Reflect and share... Finally sing an antonym, psalm or appropriate song, according to your local tradition...

Let us listen to Saint Mary Euphrasia:

"Prayer goes to God: The Psalmist says that he flies above the goods and honors of this world, because they are smoke (Ps. 54:7 and 61:11).

Which one of you will not be convinced of this truth, however little versed you may be in prayer? Prayer serves to persuade us more that only God deserves our love." St. Mary Euphrasia, Intr. Conf., Third edition, Bogotá 1991, p. 243

LET US PRAY TOGETHER WITH THE INTENTIONS OF ALL MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:

“Look at us God, wrapped up so often in networks of death, and fallen in sorrow and anguish. Contemplate in us the face of Your suffering Son, You who are kind and just.

Move our fallen feet, and make it so that through the difficulties of our aimless wandering, we feel your company to reach a safe and welcoming place on this Earth, while we prepare for our last pilgrimage to the place that you prepare for us, there when You live for an eternal happiness.