INTRODUCTION:

The tragic picture of a three-year old Syrian child, Aylan Kurdi, face down and lifeless on the shore after trying to cross the Mediterranean to Greece shocked the world. It did not only break our hearts but moved us to a painful reality of exclusion and inhumane migration and refugee policies that do not respect the fundamental rights of people displaced by economic want and wars.

The horrors of suffering and deaths of thousands of people brought about by forced migration and massive displacements occurring in many places around the world stare us in the face. We see this in the ongoing massive dispersal, displacement and dislocation of peoples across the Mediterranean, from and within Africa and the Middle East and into Europe, with many of them braving the elements along great distances, dangerous seas and fortified borders. The thousands of unaccompanied minors crossing into the US from the Mexican border is another appalling situation too vivid and horrific to ignore. Equally appalling is the fate of the Rohingyas of Myanmar and out of Bangladesh whose massive migration by sea have met largely unwelcoming gestures in the Southeast Asian region. The pain and tragedy arising out of these conditions urge us to intensify our acts of mercy, relief and compassion while working intentionally on acts of justice that take into account the historic roots, systemic causes and contemporary challenges of forced migration. (Excerpts from the Istanbul Agreement of Churches Witnessing to Migrants 2015)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said: "Forced displacement is now profoundly affecting our times. It touches the lives of millions of our fellow human beings – both those forced to flee and those who provide them with shelter and protection. Never has there been a greater need for tolerance, compassion and solidarity with people who have lost everything."

In a joint statement of Pope Francis with Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Ieronymos on April 16, 2016 during his visit to Lesvos, Greece, it is said: "The tragedy of forced migration and displacement affects millions, and is fundamentally a crisis of humanity, calling for a response of solidarity, compassion, generosity and an immediate practical commitment of resources," they state. "From Lesvos, we appeal to the international community to respond with courage. We call upon all political leaders to employ every means to ensure that individuals and communities ... enjoy the fundamental right to live in peace and security."
Call to prayer and silence

Leader: In the name of our Merciful Creator who consumes our hearts with a passion to be sensitive to wounds and brokenness of our displaced brothers and sisters,

All: We praise you.

Leader: In the name of Jesus who inspires us to stand in solidarity with the marginalized and exploited,

All: We praise you.

Leader: In the name of the Holy Spirit that gives us courage to denounce the structures that dehumanize the dignity of human beings and wisdom to seek life-giving alternatives,

All: We praise you.

Hymn: (Choose any appropriate song)

Antiphon: By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept... How could we sing God’s song in a foreign land? (Psalm 137:1-6 –7)

The civil war and conflict in Syria has resulted in over 200,000 dead; over 11 million in need of humanitarian assistance; over 6.5 million internally displaced; and over 4 million refugees, half of whom are children. Children are constantly in danger of becoming ill, malnourished, separated from their families, abused, or exploited. Millions are unable to attend school. (Source: World Renew 2016)

O God, our help in ages past,
it was you who led the Israelites through the wilderness,
a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day.
We pray that you will guide the vulnerable and desperate migrants who today search out new hope and new life.
As they search for a way out,
as they board ships and trucks and cross fences,
as they carry children and walk for miles,
protect them, God.

Our hope for years to come,
you created all people to flourish
to live in safety, to find meaning, to experience love, to seek after you.
We pray for those who have lost hope, safety, love, and faith.
We pray for parents whose children have been lost or have died.
We pray for children who are going without food, water, and safety.
We pray for communities abandoned and for communities overwhelmed.
Oh God, bring miraculous and life-giving hope.
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
you are the one who brings peace.
You are our mother hen, protecting us under your wings.
We pray for an end to the tyranny of ISIS and to the violence in Syria
Protect those who haven’t yet found a way to leave.
We pray for the hearts of those who are intent to kill.
We pray for the eyes of the world to turn toward this war.
Give wisdom to the leaders who must choose how to facilitate peace.

Our eternal home,
in You we find life and providence,
for this life and for the next.
For those who have lost everything, we pray you will rebuild their lives.
For those desperate for a new home, open the doors to safer places.
For those longing for the basic necessities of life, restore their material goods.
For those whose communities and families have been ripped apart, strengthen new bonds of friendship.
And for the church, near and far, which worships in safety today -- inspire us to welcome the stranger.
Help us to discern how to reach out to refugees in acts of mercy and how to help them seek justice for long-term hope. Glory...

**Antiphon 1:** By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept...How could we sing God’s song in a foreign land? (Psalm 137:1-6 –7)

**Antiphon 2:** God is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” (Psalm 9:9)

Voice 1: No one leaves home if the hurt that will come is greater than the hurt that they will leave behind. No one leaves if the ocean will swallow them up. No one leaves home, if there is peace. As a refugee there is only ever half of you in one place; because you have left half of you where you have come from, and half of you is rejected where you arrive.” - Poet JJ Bola, refugee from Congo

(Taken from Warsen Shire’s poem “Home”)

Voice 2: No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark. You only run for the border when you see the whole city running as well.

Voice 1: You have to understand, that no one puts their children in a boat unless the water is safer than the land. No one burns their palms under trains beneath carriages.
No one spends days and nights in the stomach of a truck feeding on newspaper unless the miles travelled means something more than journey.
Voice 2: No one crawls under fences, no one wants to be beaten, pitied. No one chooses refugee camps or strip searches where your body is left aching, or prison, because prison is safer than a city of fire and one prison guard in the night is better than a truckload of men who look like your father. No one could take it. No one could stomach it. No skin would be tough enough.

Voice 1: The ‘Go home refugees, dirty immigrants, asylum seekers, sucking our country dry, with their hands out, they smell strange, savage, messed up their country and now they want to mess ours up…’ How do the words, the dirty looks roll off your backs? Maybe because the blow is softer than a limb torn off.

Voice 2: Or the words are more tender than fourteen men between your legs or the insults are easier to swallow than rubble, than bone, than your child’s body in pieces.

Voice 1: I want to go home, but home is the mouth of a shark. Home is the barrel of the gun and no one would leave home unless home chased you to the shore, unless home told you to quicken your legs leave your clothes behind crawl through the desert wade through the oceans…drown…save…be hunger…beg…forget pride…your survival is more important.

Voice 2: No one leaves home until home is a sweaty voice in your ear, saying- ‘Leave, run away from me now. I don’t know what I’ve become, but I know that anywhere is safer than here.’

Glory be...

Antiphon 2: God is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.” (Psalm 9:9)

Antiphon 3: What is good has been explained to you; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with Your God. (Micah 6:8)

Sharing:

1. In your Unit, how are you sustaining the efforts and initiatives of the congregation/Church to respond concretely to the struggles of the displaced, dislocated and dispersed?
2. On a personal level, what do you commit to propel our ministry to migrants and refugees especially during the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy?

(After every sharing, sing once the refrain of any Magnificat Song)

Antiphon 3: What is good has been explained to you; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with Your God. (Micah 6:8)

Reading: Luke 10:29-37
Intercessory Prayers:

Response: God of mercy and hope, hear us.

1. That all government and institutions may continue to develop strategies, mechanisms and protocols on how to respond more to urgent life and death situations facing migrants, refugees and their families and their communities, we pray.
2. That nations may truly commit to eliminate hunger and poverty for all by achieving food and jobs security, we pray.
3. That we may be bold enough in our public advocacy and organizing at all levels to achieve longer term struggle for social justice, we pray.
4. That we may continue to be engaged critically with local, national, regional, international, governmental, non-governmental, intergovernmental and multi-lateral groups and mechanisms, including the United Nations and its related bodies, to work for the welfare and human rights of migrants and their families, refugees and communities, we pray.
5. That migrants and refugees and their families may no longer allow themselves to be defined by their stations and status in life as migrants and refugees but by their common and inalienable dignity and indivisible human rights as human beings, we pray.
6. Add your own prayers.

Our Father/Mother...

Closing prayer: Merciful God, you love justice and you established peace and equality on earth. Send us Your spirit and strengthen our will to journey with our brothers and sisters who are displaced, dislocated and dispersed. May we be filled with courage and wisdom to stand for all that leads to freedom and truth. This we ask through Christ our Savior. Amen.

Prayer contributed by Sr. Minela Alvarez, Province of the Philippines