

SHARE THE JOURNEY
USA Migration Campaign
Information/Talking Points

THE CAMPAIGN

The U.S. Catholic Church Joins Global Migration A global campaign in support of migrants and refugees will be launched on September 27, 2017, by Pope Francis. Sponsored internationally by Caritas Internationalis and in the U.S. by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the *Share the Journey* campaign aims to engage the Church and others who care about migrants and refugees, around the world and in the United States. Through education and advocacy, the campaign seeks to affect both personal feelings and opinions as well as public policy. It is a call to prayer, to reflection and to action. Pope Francis will launch the campaign by performing a symbolic gesture of “reaching out” to migrants and refugees, inviting others to join him.

The campaign asks our brothers and sisters throughout the U.S. to show their compassion and to *Share the Journey* with the millions of people across the globe who are fleeing poverty, oppression, war and disaster. Just as Jesus journeyed to share the Gospel of love and sacrificed for others, Catholics in the U.S. are being called to share the physical and emotional journey with migrants and refugees by extending the hand of dignity, love and support. We ask that all Catholics begin a journey toward knowing and understanding those among us that need our help since we are all God’s children.

Invitation to a week of prayer in support of migrants and refugees The September 27 launch of the U.S. campaign, *Share the Journey*, will be followed in the U.S. by a Week of Prayer and Action (October 7–13) when parishes, schools, universities and other institutions and individuals across the country will join in prayer, education and sharing of information about migrants and refugees to support them locally and around the world.

Our faith calls on us to welcome refugees and asylum-seekers. We are all children of God, and God calls us to love our neighbor. Our neighbors live across the street, across the country, across borders, oceans and hemispheres. Our neighbors don’t always look like us, pray like us, dress like us or talk like us, but each one deserves a chance to flourish in this life. Parents and children desperately need food, shelter, safety, and a chance to rebuild their lives. Our Church teaches that people have a right to meet their needs at home and the right to leave when they cannot. Governments have a duty to protect them, and it is our obligation to help those who are suffering. The U.S. has enough resources, that – if well spent – can support the needy here and abroad.

The *Share the Journey* campaign is firmly anchored in the Bible as both the Old and New Testaments are filled with verses that tell us to care for the immigrant. Never is this more eloquently expressed than in Matthew 25 when Jesus tells us to welcome “the stranger,” because “whatever you did for the least of these, you did it for me.” That makes clear our duty as Christians to help the migrant, not reject them. By supporting this campaign you can show your love for your neighbors - each one of them—by praying for change and using your voice to vote and support programs that provide food, shelter and safety.

The Holy Father has made the plight of migrants a centerpiece of his papacy from its beginning when he visited the Italian island of Lampedusa where many land on their way from Africa and the Middle East trying to reach Europe. He calls on us to live the Gospels and share Christ's message of God's loving mercy through encounter with others. As a Church, we will continue to stand in solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters because for us this is not a political issue, it's a human issue.

Nearly half of all displaced people around the world are innocent children, and some are forced to flee without a parent or guardian. These children are among the more than 60 million people today who are displaced from their native land because of lack of food, violence or terrorism, and religious persecution. Many are displaced within their own country, while others have sought refuge in neighboring countries. We're facing a **global crisis not seen since World War II** and must accept with compassion those fleeing persecution and seeking refuge. As the Holy Father has said there is currently a great need for a "spirit of readiness to welcome those fleeing from wars and hunger, and solidarity with those deprived of their fundamental rights, including the right to profess one's faith in freedom and safety."

In the U.S., we must always remember that we are a nation of migrants and refugees, many of whom fled religious persecution. Thus, Leviticus 19 speaks to us: *The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.* Many of our ancestors came to this country seeking a better life due to oppression, prejudice, systemic poverty, violence and war in their native land; today's refugees are fleeing that and worse. These are innocent people who have lost so much – not just their homes, but often family and friends, jobs and respect. **People like Hassan Zaroid**, who had to leave behind his house, his car and his business because his Syrian neighborhood had become too dangerous for him and his pregnant wife. They moved to Jordan with only the clothes on their backs, awaiting an uncertain future. They deserve our compassion, just as our fathers, grandparents and great grandparents did when they arrived on our shores.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), our Church's international relief and development organization, was founded 75 years ago to assist refugees during World War II. We all should be proud of that shared heritage and work to further it. The USCCB/MRS, and CCUSA through their Diocesan Catholic Charities refugee resettlement offices provide assistance, support, mercy and compassion.

As our ancestors were once immigrants who contributed to their community, we know firsthand about the contributions that today's immigrants and refugees provide our communities. Many refugees are trained professionals who have a lot to offer; they are doctors, teachers, and scientists. And, they share the same basic hopes we have for our own families: peace, safety, an education for our children, and an opportunity to flourish. They add diversity to our communities and want their children to share the same freedoms we enjoy. It is imperative that we listen to their stories to truly see the face of Christ in these our brothers and sisters.

THE ISSUES

Global Refugee Crisis

According to the United Nations, in 2015, 1 in every 113 people worldwide was forced to flee their home—including many women, children and the elderly. More than 65 million people are displaced globally, including 21 million refugees, making it increasingly difficult for the international community to respond.

In places like Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, people flee violence and instability – often on a moment's notice. The war in Syria has produced nearly 5 million refugees. Natural disasters, like long droughts and even famine, are also driving people from their homes in Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, adding to the growing number of displaced.

Many of these countries don't have the resources to address their own needs, or the needs created by an influx of refugees. In Lebanon, for example, 1 out of 3 people is a refugee, significantly straining that country's infrastructure. In South Sudan, prolonged drought and violence have put families on the verge of famine, without as much as a single meal a day. As a global leader, the U.S. has a moral obligation to assist those in need, and enough resources that, if well spent, can support people here and abroad.

Addressing root causes and finding long-term solutions - While we need to continue humanitarian responses in emergencies, millions of people forced to flee by those emergencies can live an entire generation as a refugee. The current average number of years people spend as refugees is 20 years. While the U.S., along with many other countries and international aid organizations, have provided significant assistance, we need to address the reality of these long-term needs.

Supporting the most vulnerable around the world - People seeking refuge in the U.S. and elsewhere are victims, oftentimes of the same terrorists from which we must protect ourselves. They are people like us who seek safety and a better life for their families. By banning refugees and travel from Syria, Somalia, and Yemen, we are turning our backs on suffering people during their most difficult hours.

The U.S. travel ban does little to protect our communities and puts the lives of some of the most vulnerable people at risk. Our elected officials have an obligation to protect the security of the American people, and of course need to take concerns about security seriously. But, denying entry to people desperate enough to leave their homes, cross oceans in tiny boats, and abandon all their worldly possessions just to find safety will not make our nation safer. In fact, refugees are far more likely to be the victims of terrorism than they are to pose any threat to anyone. In addition, the U.S. is already using a thorough vetting process for refugees – especially for those from Syria and surrounding countries.

Resettlement in the United States and responding to refugees overseas are the responsibilities of both the faith community and the government. The U.S. has always welcomed refugees. At a time when the number of displaced people is at an all-time high, the U.S. should not reduce its admittance of refugees. Protecting America means protecting the moral values embedded in our foundation. By welcoming the most vulnerable and persecuted in our global family, we show the world that we are an open, tolerant nation which seeks to protect those who need our protection; this has always been America's greatest strength.

Central America Migrant Crisis

In the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, many face an insurmountable level of violence, insecurity, and lack of economic opportunities. "Join-or-die" gang recruitment policies make life nearly impossible for innocent youth in gang-controlled areas, and corrupt or otherwise inadequate policing fails to protect them. Deciding to migrate to a safe country like the U.S. is a life and death matter.

In 2014, close to 69,000 unaccompanied children from Central America were apprehended by U.S. border patrol.

The perilous journey threatens lives. Attempting to cross the Southern border is dangerous. Smugglers extort would-be immigrants for exorbitant sums of money and then transport them under perilous conditions. Others opt to cross through the Southwest's treacherous deserts. Thousands of migrants have tragically perished in such attempts.

Immigration Reform

By establishing more means for individuals to enter the U.S. legally, and protecting children who come seeking safety, the U.S. enables border officials to focus on apprehending drug traffickers and criminals.

The USCCB opposes "enforcement only" immigration policies and supports broad immigration reform. The U.S. should pass an immigration policy that creates an earned pathway to citizenship and keeps families together.

Ineffectiveness of a border wall - There are better ways to deal with the flight of migrants and asylum-seekers than spending millions on a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Development aid to the Northern Triangle countries of Central America helps address the root causes that force people to flee from insecurity and lack of economic opportunity.

The Catholic Church recognizes a government's right to protect its borders and regulate who enters, but governments also have an obligation to protect the vulnerable, especially children. The children coming to the U.S. are not sneaking in like it has been reported. There are high numbers of children that are actually turning themselves over to uniformed personnel in search of safety. International law states that detention for children should be a last resort. When detention is forced, conditions should be monitored by independent third parties and any abuse or neglect should be immediately addressed.

Asylum seekers must get their day in court - As a nation, we have always afforded asylum-seekers their day in court to apply for protection if their lives are in imminent danger; yet, many of these children are deported back to their home countries without a hearing. The USCCB calls for efforts to protect due process rights for children as promulgated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2008.