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Many Journeys, One Family

National Migration Week 2018

January 7-14, 2018

For nearly a half century, the Catholic Church in the United States has celebrated National Migration Week, which is an opportunity for the Church to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children, and victims and survivors of human trafficking. The theme for National Migration Week 2017 draws attention to the fact that each of our families have a migration story, some recent and others in the distant past. Regardless of where we are and where we came from, we remain part of the human family and are called to live in solidarity with one another.

Unfortunately, in our contemporary culture we often fail to encounter migrants as persons, and instead look at them as unknown others, if we even notice them at all. We do not take the time to engage migrants in a meaningful way, as fellow children of God, but remain aloof to their presence and suspicious or fearful of them. During this National Migration Week, let us all take the opportunity to engage migrants as community members, neighbors, and friends.

Please find in this toolkit suggestions on how you can celebrate National Migration Week and educate community members about the Catholic Church's teaching about migration and her loving solidarity with migrants. Learn, too, about Pope Francis' ongoing [efforts](#) to support national churches' [solidarity efforts](#) being joined with those of the universal church.

Por cerca de medio siglo, la Iglesia Católica en los Estados Unidos ha celebrado la Semana Nacional de la Migración, lo cual le brinda a la Iglesia una oportunidad para reflexionar sobre las circunstancias que enfrentan los migrantes, incluyendo a los inmigrantes, los refugiados, los niños y a las víctimas y sobrevivientes del tráfico humano. El tema para la Semana Nacional de la Migración 2017 hace hincapié en el llamado del Papa Francisco para crear una cultura de encuentro y, al hacerlo, a mirar más allá de nuestros deseos y necesidades a las de los demás alrededor del mundo. En la homilía que dio en su primer [Pentecostés](#) como Papa, él enfatizó la importancia del encuentro en la fe cristiana: "Esta palabra para mí es muy importante: el encuentro con los demás. ¿Por qué? Porque la fe es un encuentro con Jesús, y nosotros debemos hacer lo mismo que hace Jesús: encontrar a los demás."

Con respecto a los migrantes, a menudo en nuestra cultura moderna no los vemos como personas sino que los vemos como que fueran otros o simplemente nos son invisibles. No nos tomamos el tiempo para hacerlos partícipes en una manera significativa, como iguales hijos de Dios, sino que permanecemos alejados de su presencia y sospechosos de sus intenciones. Durante esta Semana Nacional de la Migración, tomemos esta oportunidad para hacerlos partícipes como miembros de la comunidad, como vecinos, como amigos—todos los cuales son dignos de nuestra atención y nuestro apoyo.

Por favor, en este kit de herramientas, encuentren sugerencias para la manera de celebrar la Semana Nacional de la Migración y para educar a los miembros de sus comunidades acerca de la posición de la Iglesia Católica sobre el tema de la migración.

Migration Facts:

Immigration Reform

Position: The Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Church support humane immigration reform. We must reform our broken system that separates families and denies due process.

Facts:

- Since 2010, 3.6 million immigrants have become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#).
- Unauthorized immigrants also pay a wide range of taxes, including sales taxes where applicable and property taxes – directly if they own and indirectly if they rent. [Estimates](#) are that undocumented migrants pay \$11.64 billion every year in state and local taxes.
- In many cases, it can take over a decade for legal permanent residents to reunify with immediate family members from Mexico, the Philippines, and other countries (See [Congressional Research Service](#)).

Refugee Protection

Position: USCCB supports protection, humanitarian support, and durable solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced people. USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services in collaboration with

local Catholic Charities across the United State form the largest private, U.S. refugee resettlement network, and has helped welcome and resettle over one million refugees since 1975.

Facts:

- The U.S. [resettled](#) 53,716 refugees in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 including 20,232 from Africa, 5,173 from East Asia, 5,205 from Europe, 1,688 from Latin America, and 21,418 from the Near East.
- The top six populations resettled during FY 2017 were from : Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Burma, and Ukraine. Id.
- An estimated 21,027 Syrian refugees have been resettled in the United States since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. Id.
- According to the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 65.6 million persons were displaced in the world at the end of 2016. ([UNHCR](#))

Unaccompanied Children and Families from Central America

Position: The United States should provide child welfare protection, refugee protection, and safe, humane durable solutions for unaccompanied children arriving at our borders without their parent or legal guardian . In recent years, many of these children have been from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Most are fleeing grave, life-threatening violence and gang recruitment and are seeking to reunify with family in the United States.

Facts:

- In FY 2015, Mexico deported 165,000 Central Americans. The number detained in Mexico has tripled in the past four years amid growing pressure and economic support from the US to stem the flow. ([The Guardian](#))
- [In calendar year 2016](#), the United States and Mexico returned 216,872 people to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Immigrant Detention

Position: The United States should fix our broken immigration system instead of taking an enforcement-only approach to dealing with irregular migration. Immigrant detention is a growing industry in this country, with Congress allocating as much as \$2 billion a year to maintain and expand it. The Administration's FY 2018 budget requests even more funding for detention. Due to mandatory detention laws people who are not flight risks or risks to national security and are extremely vulnerable, such as asylum-seekers, families, and victims of human trafficking, are being held unnecessarily in detention. There are alternatives to detention that are more humane, more cost-effective, and more consistent with American values.

Facts:

- In FY2015 the Department of Homeland Security detained 406,595 immigrants compared to 486,651 in FY2014. ([Department of Homeland Security](#))
- Over 200 county and city prisons contract with the federal government to detain immigrants and account for 67 percent of the population.
- Community-based alternatives to detention programs cost on average \$10.55 per person per day, as compared to \$164 per person per day for detention. ([GAO](#))

Human Trafficking

Position: The United States must not only hold human traffickers accountable for their crimes, but also work to prevent trafficking and provide protection and healing to victims of trafficking.

Human trafficking is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. The Catholic Church has long condemned this practice as an affront to human dignity.

Facts:

- Estimates vary, but as many as 17,500 persons are trafficked into the United States annually.
- Although sex trafficking remains a serious problem, the two largest trafficking cases in the United States involved labor trafficking, in Guam and in New York (Long Island).

National Migration Week Talking Points

- Catholics are called to stand with immigrants and refugees as our brothers and sisters. This is who we are. This is what we do.
- Pope Francis invites us to be part of a culture of encounter as we welcome, protect, integrate, and promote immigrants and refugees in our midst.
- For all people of Catholic faith, we belong to the same Church no matter where we're from. Our Catholic identity isn't based on where we live but on our faith in Jesus Christ. We are one family, and the Catholic Church is always our home.
- For newcomers who are not of the Catholic faith, Catholics recognize their human dignity and welcome them as new neighbors and friends.
- In Pope Francis, we have a leader from Argentina, a country of immigrants. He is the son of immigrants and a native Spanish speaker. Issues for immigrants coming from Latin America to the United States are close to his heart.
- Immigration is about real people who are trying to find a better life and a new beginning. As Pope Francis stated, "Each migrant has a name, a face and a story."
- Welcoming immigrants is part of Catholic Social Teaching and reflects the Biblical tradition to welcome the stranger.
- The Catholic Church has been welcoming immigrants and refugees to the United States since the nation's founding and has been integral to helping them integrate into American culture.
- In addition to welcoming and caring for those in need, the Church continues to uphold the centrality of family reunification as a critical component of our immigration and refugee systems.
- America is a better country due to the contributions of immigrants and refugees.
- Forced displacement of people is at the highest level since World War II, with more than 65 million people displaced around the world and over 22 million refugees.
- Refugees are the most rigorously screened population coming into America. This screening happens before they ever set foot in our country. The United States has the most thorough background checks of immigrants of any nation in the world.
- The Administration recently determined that only 45,000 refugees could come to the United States in the coming year Fiscal Year 2018. That is the lowest refugee determination in U.S. history. We can and must do better by ensuring that all 45,000 be welcomed in 2018 and also that the U.S. welcome at least 75,000 refugees in 2019.



Letters to the Editor Tips

Writing a letter to the editor (LTE) is the perfect way to add another perspective, offer a rebuttal, or express your appreciation for an already-published article or commentary piece. Please let us know if your letter to the editor is published! We'll deliver it to elected officials and promote it on our social media. Completing this final step in the letter to the editor process helps ensure that your letter's impact is even greater. Email us at migrationweek@usccb.org with a link to your published LTE.

Letter to the Editor Writing Tips

- **Keep it short (150-250 words)** – If you don't edit your LTE, the news outlet might edit it for you. Since they could cut out your main point, it's best to write something both punchy and brief.
- **Speak in your own voice.** Tell why the article matters to you. Talk about your faith, professional experience or knowledge of climate change. Be personal and authentic.
- **Get local.** Editors are generally more interested in letters that highlight local impacts. Can you relate the issues raised in a national piece on migration and immigration to issues impacting your own community?
- **Get personal.** Migration is about people on the move. Personalize your perspective with a story about people you know affected by migration- a family member or someone you know from your church.
- **Follow these best practices:**
 - 1) **Reference a recent article (if possible).** Your letter is most likely to be published if it responds directly to the newspaper's recent coverage of a specific migration issue. Mention the article you're responding to by its headline and date.
 - 2) **Send your LTE in the body of your email, not as an attachment.**
 - 3) **Include contact information:** Include your full name, contact information, location, and profession or expertise (if relevant) in the email as well. (The paper will not print your contact information.)
- **Be timely** – Try to get your LTE in within one to three days the relevant article is published.