

A dramatic painting by Caravaggio depicting the Madonna di Loreto. The Virgin Mary, with a halo, holds the Christ Child. They are shown in a dark, interior setting, possibly a doorway. Two men, likely the Magi, are kneeling in prayer before them, one holding a staff. The lighting is focused on the figures, creating strong highlights and deep shadows.

A  
STRANGER,  
and YOU  
WELCOMED  
ME

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ACTIVITY &  
RESOURCE  
GUIDE

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IMMIGRATION  
SUNDAY MN

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FEAST OF  
OUR  
LORD'S  
EPIPHANY

JANUARY 3, 2016

*Image: Caravaggio, Madonna Di Loreto*

USCCB National Migration Week  
January 3-9, 2016



MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



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# ADVOCACY, EDUCATION & MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

## ADVOCACY

When we consider the matter of migration, we must recognize that this is a worldwide phenomenon. All across the globe, families and individuals are increasingly feeling compelled to leave their home countries. Some are refugees from human trafficking or violence and civil war, like the Syrian refugees. Others are escaping political oppression or economic hardship. All seek a better future for themselves and their families. Yet, migration often leads to other problems, especially harm to the family.

This migration crisis calls us to remember our common humanity. This is the simple recognition that we are all one human family. Before we are citizens of this nation, we are foremost brothers and sisters—children of a loving God who invites us to a new relationship with one another. Thus, we *each* have a responsibility to work for the objective good of others, including those brothers and sisters who come from other lands. We have an obligation to protect the inherent and fundamental dignity of each person (*see* CCC 1897-1948).

Considering the migration crisis with an open heart and mind can be a challenge. Yet, the call to welcome the stranger plays an important role in the lives of faithful Christians. In the Gospel of Matthew (25:35), Jesus tells his disciples, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." The migrant, who moves from one country to another, is truly a stranger in the midst. Often unfamiliar with the local tongue of the new country, not to mention its customs, the migrant needs the support of local communities so that he or she can better adjust to the new surroundings.

We encourage parishes not only to educate and reflect on the foundations of Catholic teaching concerning migration and immigrants, but to share meaningful ways to help promote and protect the human dignity of every person and to help welcome the stranger.

*Following is a list of five advocacy actions that can help you, your parish, and parish groups support and advocate for migrant families.*

All links, as well as PDF versions of this Activity Guide and the Immigration Sunday Liturgy Planning Guide, are found on the MCC Immigration Sunday MN page ([www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/](http://www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/)).

## 1. Federal Immigration Reform Legislation

### Background

The U.S. immigration system continues to be broken and it needs repair. Parishioners can go to the Justice for Immigrants website to send their U.S. Senators and Representative an electronic postcard that urges them to take action and finally pass comprehensive federal immigration reform.

Link to electronic postcard on the USCCB Justice for Immigrants website: <http://bit.ly/1PfEgf7>

## 2. Syrian Refugee Crisis

### Background

The political and humanitarian crisis in Syria is a serious concern for the Catholic Church and the bishops of the United States. In the past five years, at least four million Syrians have fled their country as a consequence of the civil war and the rise of ISIS. Most have fled to surrounding countries, especially Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, and many others have moved on to Europe with the hope of finding a place of peace and safety. Pope Francis and the Catholic bishops have called on the U.S. government and the international community to provide support to both Syrian refugees fleeing violence and to countries that have been at the forefront of this humanitarian effort. These recommendations include:

- Ending the conflict in Syria and Iraq
- Building an inclusive and lasting peace to allow Syrian refugees—also including those who are ethnic and religious minorities—to return home and rebuild their countries.
- Providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees who have fled to neighboring refugee countries.
- Providing development aid to refugee host countries near Syria so they are able to properly welcome and care for the refugees.
- Providing 100,000 annual resettlement slots for the most vulnerable refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict.
- Designating an additional 100,000 refugees to be resettled in the U.S. from other countries.

### Ways to help

- **Pray** that God provides his protection to Syrians and all other refugees displaced by violence and persecution.

[www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/national-migration-week/upload/Prayer-for-Migrant-Families.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/national-migration-week/upload/Prayer-for-Migrant-Families.pdf)

- **Write** a letter to President Obama and your members of Congress to take leadership on helping Syrian refugees.

<https://secure.crs.org/site/Advocacy?pagename=homepage&page=UserAction&id=908&AddInterest=1881>

- **Visit** the USCCB page dedicated to the crisis for additional resources and background.  
[www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/syrian-refugee-crisis.cfm)

#### Resources for discussing the Syrian refugee crisis

- Talking points from USCCB Migration & Refugee Services  
<http://bit.ly/1X8KHQj>
- Step-by-step explanation of the U.S. comprehensive refugee screening process, which averages two years  
<http://bit.ly/1Hq7sfG>
- Statement from Bishop Elizondo, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration  
[www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-157.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-157.cfm)
- Statement from Archbishop Kurtz, Archdiocese of Louisville (KY) and USCCB President  
[www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-127.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-127.cfm)
- USCCB statement of solidarity  
[www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-155.cfm](http://www.usccb.org/news/2015/15-155.cfm)

### 3. Family Reunification Program

#### Background

Migration and Refugee Services provides community-based family reunification services to unaccompanied children who are in immigration proceedings. With support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, MRS through its national network of more than 200 social service agencies provides a necessary safety net for families who have been separated by migration. The MRS network provides home assessments and post-release services to strengthen recently reunified families and help them integrate into local communities.

There are ways for individuals to get involved with or financially help this effort. Visit the USCCB Family Reunification Program page for more details to share with parishioners:

<http://www.usccb.org/about/children-and-migration/family-reunification/index.cfm>

### 4. Migrant Detention System Report

#### Background

Encourage parishioners to read the recently released report by the USCCB and the Center for Migration Studies, *Unlocking Human Dignity: A Plan to Transform the U.S. Immigration Detention*



*System*, which highlights the inequities at play in the migrant detention system and gives suggestions to make it more just and respectful of human dignity.

<http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/upload/unlocking-human-dignity-report.pdf>

## 5. MCC Catholic Advocacy Network

### Background

The Catholic Advocacy Network includes thousands of Catholic and non-Catholic Minnesotans who are interested in working together to promote life and human dignity in Minnesota. Through periodic emails and a monthly E-Update, Network members are given simple, concrete ways to take action and to make an impact on social issues of concern for the Catholic Church, including federal immigration reform and, most recently, the Syrian refugee crisis. Membership is completely free and parishioners can join online at: [www.mncc.org/actioncenter](http://www.mncc.org/actioncenter).

## EDUCATION

1. **Immigration-themed parish movie showing or book club reading.** Host a movie viewing or book discussion on an immigration-related topic. Examine the movie or book, and the issue(s) it confronts, through the lens of the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota.

### *Movie suggestions*

- **ABRAZOS** follows the journey of a group of U.S. citizen children who travel 3,000 miles, from Minnesota to Guatemala, to their parents' homeland to meet their grandparents for the first time. It offers a first-hand account of the effects that the current U.S. immigration system has on Minnesota children and their families. (<http://abrazosthefilm.com/>)
- **The Least of These** provides an inside look at the federal government's practices associated with family detentions. (<http://theleastofthese-film.com>)
- **Dying to Live—a migrant's journey** is a look at the human face of the immigrant. It explores who these people are, why they leave their homes, and what they face in their journey. (<https://dyingtolive.nd.edu/>)

### *Book suggestions*

- **On 'Strangers no Longer': perspectives on the historic U.S.-Mexican Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Migration** ([www.justiceforimmigrants.org/OnStrangersNoLonger.htm](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/OnStrangersNoLonger.htm))
- **Immigration and the Next America: Renewing the Soul of Our Nation** by Archbishop José Gomez (<https://www.osv.com/Shop/Product?ProductCode=T1422>)

2. **Facilitate a discussion based on the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization test:** Host an evening gathering to discuss immigration and the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota. At the beginning of the gathering, invite parishioners to take the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization test. However, do not tell parishioners where the test is from until after they have completed it. Discuss the test, personal perceptions of immigrants, and the struggles we all sometimes have with *welcoming the stranger*. Download the test from the USCIS website ([www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1)).
3. **Host a forum on migration or U.S. immigration policy:** Host a speaker or panel discussion on migration or immigration policy. Invite speakers from your community (business, education, faith, and legislative). Consider inviting immigrants from your parish or community to share their personal stories. Examine current immigration policies in both the United States and Minnesota. Discuss the issues in light of past, current, and proposed legislation. Contact MCC Policy and Outreach Coordinator, Kathryn Mollen, to help connect your school or parish to

speakers or Catholic immigrants who may be willing to share their story (651-256-7586/kmollen@mncc.org).

- 4. Educate on Catholic Social Teaching on immigration:** Offer a parish education program on Catholic Social Teaching on immigration. Use copies of the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota to facilitate discussion (contact MCC at 651-227-8777 to order copies). Invite your local diocesan or Catholic Charities immigration contact.

## MINISTRY

### PARISH COMMUNITY WELCOMING IDEAS

**Meet and Greet at Liturgies.** Develop a team whose ministry is to welcome people, be they regulars or newcomers, when they are entering the church.

**Acknowledge / welcome newcomers by the priest after Mass or through the Mass intercessions.** Everyone is involved in the welcoming of newcomers—sometimes the most gratifying welcome a visitor can receive is from someone she wouldn't expect to welcome her, in a place she didn't expect it to happen.

**House Blessings.** Develop a team who will visit newcomers to the parish; have a priest come with to offer them a house blessing.

**Baptismal teams.** The Baptism of a child can be an important point of contact between your parish and newcomers. It can be used as an ideal opportunity to welcome new families—new life!—into your parish.

**Connect with other local immigrant services.** We often struggle to know how best to engage with newcomers in our communities. There will be many organizations working with immigrants in your local area. Contact them! They may be able to point to specific needs immigrants in your community have or to establish projects that you might support.

**Celebrate the universality of God's faithful servants.** Consider recognizing feast days that are significant to the cultures represented within your parish community. Reach out to parishioners who are from the culture of those saints you celebrate to find out what sacred traditions may be good to incorporate into the celebration. Beautiful sacred traditions are found so many cultures!



## YOUTH ACTIVITIES

- **Include youth in the advocacy activities.** Encourage children to get involved in their communities to give them an opportunity to advocate on behalf of their immigration neighbors and fellow parishioners—kids and families with whom they may be friends. Legislators do listen to children. While they may not yet have the right to vote, their parents DO!
- **Explore family history.** Ask children to bring in the oldest family photo they can find. Photocopy the family photo and have children write family stories about their photos. Mount photos and stories on a piece of cardstock. Frame each picture and story on a larger piece of construction paper and have children illustrate the frames. Create a large quilt with all the pictures. Display the quilt in the gathering space of your church.
- **Why did they leave home?** Invite immigrant parents or grandparents to speak about their experiences as immigrants. Have children interview their parents and grandparents.
- **Ancestry interview.** Host a luncheon or tea party for grandparents and grandchildren. Provide an opportunity for children to interview their grandparents about their ancestry. Have children record their responses in homemade books.
- **Immigration tests.** Invite youth to take the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization exam, but do not tell youth where the exam is from prior to having them take it. Distribute copies of the actual exam, which can be accessed on the Internet at the following link. Allow time for discussion after youth complete the exam. ([www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1](http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1))

## ONLINE RESOURCES

**Minnesota Catholic Conference Advocacy Area pages: Migration** ([www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/](http://www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/)) and **Immigration Sunday MN** ([www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/](http://www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/))

A resource page with background on the latest parish, state, and federal-based migration advocacy activities and priorities of the Catholic bishops of Minnesota.

**Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.** ([www.cliniclegal.org](http://www.cliniclegal.org))

CLINIC is a 501 (c) (3) organization created by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to support a rapidly growing network of community-based immigration programs and services.

**Justice for Immigrants Campaign** ([www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org))

A USCCB advocacy organization calling for comprehensive immigration reform in Congress.

**USCCB Office of Migration and Refugee Services** ([www.usccb.org/mrs/](http://www.usccb.org/mrs/))

**Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People**

([www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/migrants/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/index.htm))

**Papal Messages on Migration Archive** ([www.usccb.org/mrs/papalstatements.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/mrs/papalstatements.shtml))

Messages on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

**Minnesota State Demographic Center** (<http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>)

The Minnesota State Demographic Center analyzes and distributes Minnesota and U.S. data.