

Celebration of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2025



Opening prayer: Invocation to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit,
Fill our hearts with your divine presence.
Guide us in love and wisdom,
That we may welcome and embrace
Our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters
With open arms and generous hearts.
You, who are the breath of life,
Inspire us to walk in solidarity,
To listen with compassion,
And to act with justice.
May your light shine upon us,
So that in every face we see,
We recognize the image of Christ,
Who Himself journeyed as a stranger.
Bless all members of Claretian Family,
That we may be instruments of peace,
Builders of hope,
And witnesses of your boundless mercy.
Come, Holy Spirit, renew the earth,
And make us one in your love.
Amen.



Introduction

Today we celebrate the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, a moment of reflection, prayer, and action dedicated to those who have been displaced, seeking a new beginning beyond borders.

This year's theme, "Migrants, Missionaries of Hope", invites us to see migrants and refugees not just as individuals in need, but as bearers of faith, resilience, and renewal. In the light of the Jubilee, their journey becomes a testament to the unwavering hope that sustains them in the face of adversity.

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees has been observed by the Church since 1914, born out of a deep concern for vulnerable people on the move. It was first established shortly before the outbreak of World War I, when Pope Pius X called for prayers for migrants facing hardship. Over time, the day evolved to include refugees, recognizing their struggles and contributions to society.

Unlike previous years, when the day was celebrated on the last Sunday of September, the 2025 observance will take place on October 4-5. This change aligns with the Jubilee of Migrants and the Missionary World, emphasizing the spiritual and communal aspects of migration.

The World Day of Migrants and Refugees serves as a reminder of the Church's mission to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees. It is a call to action for communities worldwide to embrace diversity, foster dialogue, and recognize the dignity of every person seeking refuge.

The migration crisis affects millions worldwide, touching lives across nations and cultures. As believers, we are called to respond with compassion, solidarity, and a renewed commitment to justice. The journey of migrants echoes the very path of faith, uncertain, challenging, yet illuminated by trust in God.

May this day inspire us to be beacons of hope, standing in solidarity with those who journey in search of peace and a better life.



A personal experience

"I am daughter of migrants. And as a missionary, I have chosen to go beyond the borders of my country to serve Jesus and my brothers and sisters. It has been almost 20 years since I left my homeland.

From this experience, I can say that I know what it feels like a "foreigner," to not understand words or gestures, to feel like I don't belong here or there, to feel embarrassed because I can't speak correctly, or to feel 'alone'... But I also know what it means to love "another land and another people" as if they are my own...

In Indonesia, I lived in a region near the border with Timor Leste and had the opportunity to share my life with migrants, Timorese families who chose to be part of Indonesia during the war. They entered in the middle of the night, fleeing the violence: children, women, even pregnant women, youth.

They entered because they believed that they could find better opportunities in Indonesia, and they work hard to establish themselves and remain. Many are still poor and are tireless fighters for a better life.



They preserve their language and support each other. But even though they have been in Indonesia for more than 25 years, many feel “divided.” They love Timor-Leste, and part of their family is there, but at the same time they feel Indonesian, even though they are sometimes treated as different. The government has recognized them as citizens, but they live a duality that goes beyond documents.

This is my little experience.

And you, do you know people who have migrated?

How do you perceive this reality?”

Looking at reality, clarifying terms

The number of international migrants worldwide in 2024 stood at 304 million. In twenty years, this number would therefore have grown by more than 108 million (UN DESA 2025). In percentage terms, the change is also significant: in 2000, international migrants represented 2.8% of the world's population, compared to 3.7 per cent of people globally in 2024.

In 2024, and with 94 million, Europe hosted more international migrants than any other region due largely to refugee flows from Ukraine. Northern America was home to the second largest number with 61 million, followed by the region of Northern Africa and Western Asia with 54 million.[1]

Every day, all over the world, people make one of the most difficult decisions in their lives: to leave their homes in search of a safer, better life.

There are many reasons why people around the globe seek to rebuild their lives in a different country. Some people leave home to get a job or an education. Others are forced to flee persecution or human rights violations such as torture. Millions flee from armed conflicts or other crises or violence. Some no longer feel safe and might have been targeted just because of who they are or what they do or believe – for example, for their ethnicity, religion, sexuality or political opinions.

[1] CATHOLIC%20SOCIAL%20TEACHING/Catholic_Social_Teaching_and_Migration.01.pdf

These journeys, which all start with the hope for a better future, can also be full of danger and fear. Some people risk falling prey to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Some are detained by the authorities as soon as they arrive in a new country. Once they're settling in and start building a new life, many face daily racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

The terms "refugee", "asylum seeker" and "migrant" are used to describe people who are on the move, who have left their countries and have crossed borders. The terms "migrant" and "refugee" are often used interchangeably but it is important to distinguish between them as there is a legal difference.

Who is a refugee?[1]

A refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations and persecution there. Their own government cannot or will not protect them from those dangers. Refugees have a right to international protection.

Who is an asylum seeker?

An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. Seeking asylum is a human right. This means everyone should be allowed to enter another country to seek asylum.

Who is a migrant?

There is no internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant. Like most agencies and organizations, we at Amnesty International understand migrants to be people staying outside their country of origin, who are not asylum seekers or refugees.

[1] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>

Biblical Readings for Reflection

Jesus himself was a migrant, forced to flee into Egypt as a child to escape persecution. The Bible is rich with stories of exile, displacement, and divine guidance through the trials of migration. As disciples of Christ, we must open our hearts and communities, making space for those who seek refuge and dignity.

The Scriptures provide profound insight into God's call to welcome and protect the vulnerable. Let us meditate upon Matthew 25:35 - 40

Matthew 25:35-40 is a powerful passage where Jesus describes the righteous as those who have fed the hungry, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, and cared for the sick and imprisoned. He declares that whatever is done for the least of these is done for Him. This message resonates deeply with the theme of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2025: Migrants, missionaries of hope. It reminds us that welcoming strangers is not just an act of charity but a recognition of Christ in every human being. In a world where migrants and refugees often face rejection, hardship, and exclusion, this passage calls us to transform our perspective, to see them not as burdens but as bearers of hope and renewal.



Jesus' words challenge us to move beyond passive sympathy and into active compassion. Hospitality becomes sacred when it recognizes the divine presence in those in need. It calls communities and individuals to provide not only material assistance but also dignity, friendship, and inclusion.

This passage invites to reflection:

•How can we, in our daily lives, embody this radical welcome?

The Social Doctrine of the Church

Catholic reflection on the rights of migrants begins with the foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching, namely: the dignity and sanctity of the human person. The right to life and the conditions worthy of human life — when threatened by poverty, injustice, religious intolerance, armed conflict and other root causes of migration — give rise to the right to migrate.

As Pope John XXIII explained: Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there. The fact that one is a citizen of a particular state does not detract in any way from his membership in the human family as a whole. [1]In the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of protecting, promoting and integrating migrants. The Pope stresses the importance of international cooperation to address the root causes of forced migration, such as poverty, violence and lack of opportunities in certain countries, and criticizes inhumane policies that seek to deter migrants through the use of unjust walls and barriers (even if they are legal). In short, the Pope advocates a "culture of encounter and solidarity" in which all human beings are recognized in their dignity and treated with respect, regardless of their origin or migratory status.

In 2003, the bishops of the United States and Mexico named five principles [2] that have emerged from the “rich tradition of church teachings with regard to migration”:

1. Persons have a right to find opportunities in their own homeland. This principle reflects the responsibilities of all citizens and governments to promote the common good, creating the political, economic, and social conditions for persons to live in dignity. Wealthy and powerful nations are obliged to assist less developed nations in creating the conditions for people to live dignified lives.

[1] Pope John XXIII, encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, No. 25.

[2] *Strangers No Longer*, op. cit., Nos. 33-39.

2. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families. Pope Pius XII explained in 1952, “For the Creator of the universe made all good things primarily for the good of all.”[1] When people cannot find adequate work, they have a natural right to work elsewhere to attain the means of survival for themselves and their families.



3. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders. Our tradition recognizes the right of nations to control their territories, a right arising from their responsibility for the common good. However, as Pope Pius indicated, state sovereignty “cannot be exaggerated to the point that access to this land is, for inadequate or unjustified reasons, denied to needy and decent people from other nations...” A careful balancing of legitimate rights then becomes critical.

4. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection. Those who flee wars and persecution have a greater claim for protection from the global community.

5. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected. Even undocumented workers, often subject to inadequate wages and demeaning conditions in a shadow economy, are entitled to basic human rights in terms of wages and working conditions. Immigrant workers, even those without documents, do not lose their status as human persons made in God’s image.

The Church will never keep silent before the striking challenges many migrants were, and are still, facing. Her mandate impels her to denounce all sorts of social injustice, oppression and violence, which ultimately expel people from their environment.

[1] Pope Pius XII, *Exsul Familia*, Apostolic Constitution, Vatican City, 1952.

Reflection on Claretian identity

Saint Anthony Mary Claret's writings emphasize charity, hospitality, and missionary work, making them deeply relevant to the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. His reflections on welcoming others with love and dignity align beautifully with the spirit of this celebration. One of his key teachings is the importance of seeing Christ in every person, especially those in need. He believed that true charity is not just about giving material aid but about embracing others with genuine love and respect. His missionary zeal was rooted in the conviction that every soul deserves care and compassion, regardless of their background or circumstances. A powerful excerpt from his writings states: "Love is the fire that inflames the heart and moves it to great things. It is the force that makes us embrace all people as brothers and sisters." Love was the driving force behind Saint Anthony Mary Claret's missionary work. He believed that true evangelization was impossible without a deep, burning love for God and neighbor. Saint Anthony Mary Claret actively worked for social justice, defending the poor and marginalized, especially during his time as Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba.

As Christians, we are called to be missionaries of hope, offering love where there is fear, solidarity where there is division, and faith where there is despair.



Questions to reflect



1. What conclusions do you draw after reading this itinerary?
2. What steps can we take to ensure that migrants and refugees experience the love and acceptance that Jesus speaks of?
3. How can we actively work towards eradicating racism in our personal lives and society?

A Call to Action

1. Read the text from the Gospel of Matthew 2:13-15. Think about the scene that represents the situation of migrants yesterday and today.
2. Go to the place where refugees or migrants are served in your city. Spend some time greeting the people there and, if possible, start a conversation with a forced migrant. What do you think are important questions to ask them? Evaluate your visit/experience with a forced migrant person/family.

As we conclude this celebration, let us carry forward the message of hope and hospitality. This day is a call to open our hearts and mind, and our homes, our communities.

Let us remember:

- Every migrant carries the image of God.
- Every refugee has a story worthy of listening.
- Every act of kindness shapes a future, where peace triumphs over division.

As we step forward into the world, let our actions speak louder than words. May we, in every gesture, reflect the love of Christ, the eternal Missionary of Hope.

Final Prayer:

Song: Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

Embracing the Journey of Others

Loving and merciful God,
You call us to see You in every person we encounter.
Saint Anthony Mary Claret taught that love is a fire,
one that moves our hearts to embrace all people as brothers and sisters.
Today, as we reflect on the lives of migrants and refugees,
may we open our hearts as Claret did,
to welcome, to serve, and to uplift.
Let us not turn away from those who seek a home,
but rather meet them with warmth, dignity, and solidarity.
May our actions reflect the missionary spirit of Saint Claret,
as we strive to build a world where all people are received with love,
where no one is a stranger, and where hospitality knows no bounds.
Amen.

Final prayer, Prayer for Migrants and Refugees:

Lord of all nations, You walked among us, an exile in your own land, You knew the pain of rejection, the loneliness of the road, bless those who migrate in search of hope and dignity, strengthen them in their struggles, comfort them in their losses, let their paths be guided by your light, and open our hearts to embrace them as brothers and sisters. Amen.

