

BECOMING NEIGHBOURS

United Nations World Refugee Day Prayer Service



Source: [UNHCR World Refugee Day](#)

“Refugees are women and men, boys and girls who are no different than our own family members and friends. Each of them has a name, a face, and a story, as well as an alienable right to live in peace and to aspire to a better future for their sons and daughters. ‘The time is NOW to show that we as members of the global community stand with refugees.’

(POPE FRANCIS)

BACKGROUND

“We mark this World Refugee Day in the midst of dramatic social change.

A pandemic has tested our strength and highlighted systematic inequalities.

It has also connected us in new ways and renewed our motivation to act for equality.

In the time of COVID, we celebrate refugees who are on the frontlines fighting this pandemic, their hosts and the aid workers supporting them. We have seen everyday heroes from all walks of life step up to join the front lines. NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU COME FROM, PANDEMIC OR NOT; EVERYONE OF US CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. EVERY ACTION COUNTS.”

Source: UNHCR: World Refugee Day

GATHERING PRAYER

God of our Wandering Ancestors,
long have we known
that Your heart is with the refugee:
that You were born into time
in a family of refugees
fleeing violence in their homeland,
who then gathered up their hungry
child and fled into alien country.
Their cry, Your cry,
resounds through the ages:
WILL YOU LET ME IN?”

Give us hearts that break open
when our brothers and sisters turn to us
Then surely all these things will follow:
Ears will no longer turn deaf to their voices.
Eyes will see a moment for grace instead of a threat.
Tongues will not be silenced but will instead advocate.
And hands will reach out—
working for peace in their homeland,
working for justice in the lands where they seek safe haven.
Lord, protect all refugees in their travels.
May they find a friend in us and so make us worthy
of the refuge we have found in you. AMEN

(Prayer courtesy of Catholic Relief Services)

OPENING SONG: "ALL ARE WELCOME" *Gather (Marty Haugen)*

Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children
tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions;
All are welcome, all are welcome.
All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and a symbol of God's grace;

CALL TO WORSHIP

LEADER: We give praise to our God who
gathers us as one people. We seek to be
one with refugees and migrants.

COMMUNITY: Clear our eyes so that we
may see the sufferings of displaced people.

LEADER: We welcome those whose lives
have been dislocated by war and violence.

COMMUNITY: Open our ears so that we
may hear the cries of those deep in despair.

here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome, all are welcome.
All are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
All are welcome, all are welcome.
All are welcome in this place.

Welcome
Hospitality and God's gracious love to all

LEADER: We express our solidarity
with all who search for a new life,
a new home, a new promise.

COMMUNITY: Guide our feet that we may
spread comfort; loosen our tongues that
we might speak words of hope.

LEADER: Give us open hearts that we may
be truly welcoming to the stranger in our
midst. Through our acts of hospitality
may all be one in you. *Amen.*



"Rumichaca, border of Colombia with Ecuador. Laila , three years old sitting on the shoulders of her father Jose. Jose is a fisherman from Venezuela, now travelling with his wife and two daughters to Quito". © UNICEF/Santiago Arcos

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:35-45

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, **whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me.**'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.' Then they will answer and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison, and not minister to your needs?' He will answer them, 'Amen I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.'

As our country continues to struggle against COVID-19, we stand by all who are impacted during this difficult time, especially refugees and people of color. Many of the people who are working in jobs deemed essential - including in agriculture, package delivery, food processing, and in medical care - are refugees and migrants. They work long hours to ensure that we can put food on our table, receive our mail and online deliveries, and provide high level healthcare. They need to be protected. While there have been several legislative efforts to help our country address COVID-19, refugees and migrants have largely been excluded from this assistance. For Canadian citizens, you are invited to consider [taking action](#) to support migrant workers.



**WE MUST DO MORE TO ENSURE THAT
NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND AND THAT EVERYONE IS SAFE.**



PERSONAL/COMMUNAL REFLECTION:

(Let us pause for a few moments and ask ourselves...)

Revisit an experience of welcoming a newcomer or of you being one who has been welcomed into a different cultural reality.

What is a blessing that you have received through an encounter with someone from another culture/land?

What is the request that God asks of you at this moment?

PRAYER OF PETITION: (R)esponse: LORD, HEAR OUR PRAYER.

For an end to the violence and poverty that displaces so many people from their homes and homelands, we pray. **R**

For an end to systemic racism, that we too may experience a conversion of heart and may work together with others to ensure dignity and justice for all, we pray. **R**

For migrant workers that they may labour and live in safe and just conditions, we pray. **R**

For our law-makers that they establish and enforce laws that protect the rights and dignity of everyone, especially those most vulnerable in our country, we pray. **R**

For employers and corporations that they choose the dignity and worth of each human person over profit and power, we pray. **R**

For our community and parishes that we continue to serve those without homes and resources and speak out for just immigration reform, we pray. **R**

OUR FATHER

CLOSING PRAYER

Gracious loving God,

We pray for your children, all over the world, displaced by human disaster.

We hear the cries of the suffering; we see the violence in our midst.

You sent Your Son to be the refuge of people on the move.

We ask You to grant all refugees peace, protection, comfort and hope.

Help us to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees.

Bring us together as one family at the banquet table of Your love. *Amen.*

ACTION(S) OF SOLIDARITY

- * Pray for one refugee whom you have encountered
- * Reach out and meet a migrant who lives in your neighbourhood.
- * Learn about refugee services in your community. See [Toronto Catholic Charities](#)
- * Celebrate the bonds across cultures and religions that make us stronger and more resilient.
- * Revisit "[Laudato Si', on the care of our Common Home](#)". See especially LS 52 & 91.
- * Take part in "[Walk a Mile in My Shoes](#)" Simulation
- * Listen to [I Am A Refugee - Sultans of String feat. Ifrah Mansour](#)

