

MISSION INTENTIONS

JANUARY

2024-2025

Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education might always be respected.

Country Focus: Syria

Until December, 2024, Syria had been a nation at war for almost 14 years. During this time, more than an estimated 7,000 schools were damaged or destroyed, and about two million children were unable to attend school. Because the war lasted for such a long time, there are some children in Syria who have never even been to school.

The children able to continue going to school also faced many challenges, including over-crowded classrooms, a shortage of basic school supplies, having to move or change schools frequently due to the war, and having to drop out of school to take jobs and help support their families.

The Catholic Church has been helping Syrian children through a variety of its charitable organizations, including Caritas and Aid to the Church in Need, a Pontifical Foundation. These organizations have been providing education and counseling for Syrian children, among other services. Let us continue to pray for the children of Syria, that they might know peace.



Leading to Knowledge of the Faith

It is difficult to discuss migrants and refugees without acknowledging the challenge of illegal immigration. Catholics are called to treat everyone with dignity and respect, even those who enter another country illegally. Saint John Paul II said in his 1996 message for World Migration Day, *"In the Church no one is a stranger...It is the task of the various Dioceses...to ensure that [illegal immigrants]...may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community...Solidarity means taking responsibility for those in trouble. For Christians, the migrant is...a person whose...needs become an obligation for their responsibility"* (no. 5). We will learn more about the Church's teaching on immigration on the second page of this newsletter.

Saint Spotlight



Long before he left his home country, Saint John Baptist Scalabrini had a passion for serving migrants.

Born in the Como region of Italy in 1839, Scalabrini was ordained a priest in 1863. He was appointed Bishop of Piacenza, in northern Italy, in 1876. As bishop, he noticed many of his parishioners were migrating to places such as the United States of America, South America and Australia to escape the poverty caused by the crop failures in Italy. He worried about what would happen to his parishioners on their way to and once they had arrived in these new lands. Like today, migrants met with many challenges on their journeys, including discrimination and robbery. Scalabrini did not want his parishioners to face these hardships alone.

Taking his concerns to God in prayer and spending time in discernment, Scalabrini founded three

Saint John Baptist Scalabrini

societies whose mission was to accompany and help migrants on their journeys. The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles was founded in 1887 as a community of priests who would travel with migrants to set up churches and schools where they settled. The St. Raphael Lay Association for Assistance to Migrants was founded in 1889 to help migrants at ports of departure and arrival. The Missionary Sisters of St. Charles were founded in 1895 to open hospitals and provide catechesis in areas with large populations of new migrants.

Scalabrini didn't stop there. He met with Italian and Vatican officials and asked them for laws and policies to protect migrants. He also did the same thing when he visited the United States and Brazil by meeting with their civil and religious leaders.

Let us remember Saint John Baptist Scalabrini every year on his feast day, June 1, and try to follow his example of caring for migrants.

Formation for Life in Christ

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) states: a refugee is anyone forced to flee their home country due to war or violence, persecution, or fear of being persecuted due to race, religion, or political opinions. A refugee does not want to leave their home, but must do so in order to protect themselves and their family.

A migrant is someone who chooses to move to a different country to look for work or an environment that is not threatened by climate change. Sometimes migrants choose to immigrate permanently to their new country. Other times, migrants choose to live there temporarily before returning to their home country. Regardless of why a person leaves their home, the Catholic Church teaches that people have a right to migrate when they can no longer sustain themselves in their own land. Furthermore, because all humans were made in God's image and likeness, and are therefore sacred and equal in dignity, all humans have the same rights to the Earth's resources and the same rights to those things necessary for a dignified life, like food, shelter, clothing, medical care and education. This means that just because a person was not born in a particular country does not mean they have a lesser claim to its resources.

The Catholic Church also teaches that while countries have the right to regulate their borders and control

immigration, they must do so with justice and mercy. For example, a country must consider the common good of all people and not just its own self-interest when creating laws that govern immigration policies. Countries also must work to improve the lives of people in other nations to ensure that migration does not become necessary.

There are many documents and papal teachings from the last several decades that support the Church's current teaching on immigration. One example can be found in the 1965 Second Vatican Council document Gaudium et Spes, where it states, "The local people, moreover, especially public authorities, should all treat immigrants not as mere tools of production but as persons, and must help them to arrange for their families to live with them and to provide themselves with decent living quarters" (no. 66).

In this month's video, we will learn more about the realities migrants face through the eyes of Salvador, an immigrant who helps others who are seeking a better life for their family. As you watch the video, think about what might cause someone to want to leave their country, even if that means entering another country illegally. How should the Church respond to people in these situations?



Celebrating the Mystery

The Sacrament of the Eucharist strengthens us both individually and socially. It draws us closer to God in our personal relationship with Him, and also draws us closer to right relationship with others. When we receive the Eucharist, we are called to recognize the dignity in all humans, since Christ offered himself equally for all. In experiencing Christ's great love for us through the Eucharist, we are also called to show compassion and mercy toward those who suffer, whom Christ also loves. This includes immigrants, regardless of their citizenship status. Jesus began his earthly life as a refugee. When we receive his Body and Blood, let us pray, then, that we are able to remember with compassion all those who have left their homelands in search of a better life, and follow Christ's example in treating immigrants with love and mercy.

Teaching Prayer: World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Every year, the Catholic Church dedicates the last Sunday in September to remembering Migrants and Refugees in a special way. Called the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, this day encourages us to set aside time to pray for those who have fled their home countries. One way we can pray for refugees is the Scriptural Rosary for Migrants. To learn more about the Scriptural Rosary for Migrants, [click here](#).

Introduction to Community Life: Share the Journey: We Are All Migrants

- ✚ What are some reasons a person might migrate to a different country?
- ✚ How should Catholics in the United States respond to people who immigrate to our country?
- ✚ How can you help those in your community who have moved to the U.S. from a different country?