

The Migrants Novena

The Migrants Novena is a way to be in communion with those who have migrated from their land of origin and seek safety and security in a new land. As Holy Mother Church calls us to welcome the stranger among us, we are also called to empathetically share in their plight.

During this novena, we not only pray to our loving and merciful God, who told us from the beginning: *“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God”* (Lev. 19:34); but we also pray for the intercession of Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, the patron saint of immigrants.

Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850 – 1917) Compassionate Caregiver; Patron Saint of Immigrants

Caring for others was fundamental to Mother Cabrini’s sense of mission; which she began with a profound sense of caring for orphans, for the poor and for immigrants. To her this would have been the highest expression of charity and a true imitation of Jesus who reached out to care for all: sinners, tax-collectors, prostitutes, lepers, the lame, the blind and the sick. Mother Cabrini’s charity was practical, down-to-earth and concrete. She insisted that “Today, love cannot be hidden; it must become active, living and true.”

Mother Cabrini was a vigilant advocate for immigrants with a compassionate heart. For that reason, she was declared universal Patroness of Immigrants by Pope Pius XII.

The Church challenges us to continue this tradition of care-giving today “to the poorest and most abandoned, including the sick, the elderly, and the disabled; those who are marginalized, the victims of abuse and human trafficking; and those who have fled their homeland to seek solace and safety. May we continue to respond with compassionate care.

Novena Prayer: A Hymn Piercing the Darkness God of our Wandering Ancestors, I am an immigrant, a refugee, an exile from heaven. You made America a place of immigrants and inspired Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini and her sisters, welcoming and comforting the immigrant, helping to make this nation a home for our children. Mother Cabrini went down into the mines to meet immigrant workers where they were, her hymns piercing the darkness. But there are dark places I fear to go, people I fear to meet. Fill me with the words that emboldened your shining saint: I have the strength for everything through God who empowers me. May it be said of me that, like Mother Cabrini, I treated the stranger not as an alien, but as a brother or a sister, greeting them with an embrace and a song of joy. And when my days on Earth are done, may I be greeted by one such as she, by a hymn piercing even the darkness of death, welcoming me to God's kingdom, an exile no longer. Mother Frances Cabrini, intercede for us.

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Day One

Call to Prayer: We know, Lord, that you yourself were a migrant. You experienced the trials of the refugee, having fled as a child with your parents, Joseph and Mary, to Egypt. We know your special love for those with no other possession but one another, and you. Move our hearts, Lord, and the hearts of your people to love them as you do, to love them with your love, to be your love for migrants at the doorway of our nation.

Reflective Reading: Now after the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.' ~ Matthew 2:13-15

Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: Immigrants experience the tensions of their new situation much more than the society around them does. They have settled in a foreign land with laws, customs, and a language that they must master sooner or later, often at great personal cost. They struggle to build community among themselves in hopes of providing the sense of continuity and security they need in order to face the new world they have chosen or were forced to accept. They do not want to give up all that they value in their own ways of life—nor do they want their children to grow up without those traditions. Thus, many households carry on, to one degree or another, the cultures of immigrant parents, and today, one in five Americans enjoys immediate ties to a heritage beyond our borders.

Thought to Ponder: How do you welcome the stranger among you? How can you help them build a safe and stable community?

Prayer for the Day: Loving God, you create every person in your image and unite us all in one human family. As our brothers' and sisters' keepers, fill us with courage and compassion, that we might meet the hardships of migrants and refugees, not with silence and indifference, but with generous acts of mercy, welcoming every stranger as Christ in our midst. Amen. (From Catholic Charities, USA)

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Day Two

Call to Prayer: We know, Lord, that you yourself were a migrant. You experienced the trials of the refugee, having fled as a child with your parents, Joseph and Mary, to Egypt. We know your special love for those with no other possession but one another, and you. Move our hearts, Lord, and the hearts of your

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: The Gospel calls us to solidarity with those who are suffering, vulnerable, and in need. In this spirit we recall the words of Pope John Paul II, who proclaimed, "The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she supports them in their unhappiness." (World Migration Day, 2000).

Thought to Ponder: How do you support the suffering, the vulnerable and those in need in your daily life?

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Day Three

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Joseph and Mary, to Egypt. We know your special love for those with no other possession but one another, and you. Move our hearts, Lord, and the hearts of your people to love them as you do, to love them with your love, to be your love for migrants at the doorway of our nation.

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: We recall that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph sought refuge in Egypt and that Saint Francis not only welcomed all peoples but also went beyond borders himself to visit and befriend the enemy and stranger.

Thought to Ponder: How do you visit and befriend those called enemy and stranger?

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**Day
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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: During the flight into Egypt, the child Jesus experienced with his parents the tragic fate of the displaced and refugees, "which is marked by fear, uncertainty and unease (cf. Mt. 2:13-15, 19-23). Unfortunately, in our times, millions of families can identify with this sad reality. (World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2020)

Thought to Ponder: Think about a time when you were "displaced" (relocating to a new city, visiting a different country). Did you feel welcomed? Why or why not?

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: As Franciscans, we are urged to support our neighbors in their weakness as we would want to be supported. We are to love, as we would want to be loved.

Thought to Ponder: What does supporting and loving our neighbors look like in your own life?

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative

Reflection:

"Our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarized by four words: welcome, protect, promote, integrate." (Fratelli Tutti, 129)

Thought to Ponder: How can you "welcome, protect, promote, and integrate" the stranger among you?

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: We have to know in order to understand. Knowledge is a necessary step towards understanding others. ... When we talk about migrants and displaced persons, all too often we stop at statistics. But it is not about statistics, it is about real people! If we encounter them, we will get to know more about them. And knowing their stories, we will be able to understand them. (World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2020)

Thought to Ponder: The encounter is the first step to knowing and understanding the migrant. How do you "encounter" the displaced persons?

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: The arrival of those who are different, coming from other ways of life and cultures, can be a gift, for "the stories of migrants are always stories of an encounter between individuals and between cultures. For the communities and societies to which they come, migrants bring an opportunity for enrichment and the integral human development of all". (Fratelli Tutti, 133)

Thought to Ponder: Do you take the time to listen to the stories of people from different lands? Why or why not?

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Moment of Contemplation... (Take some time for silence)

Contemplative Reflection: In order to be reconciled, we need to listen. God himself taught us this by sending his Son into the world. He wanted us to listen to the plea of the suffering humanity with human ears... A love that reconciles and saves begins with listening. In today's world, messages multiply but the practice of listening is being lost. Yet it is only through humble and attentive listening that we can truly be reconciled. ...

Listening gives us an opportunity to be reconciled with our neighbor, with all those who have been “discarded”, with ourselves and with God, who never tires of offering us his mercy. (World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2020)

Thought to Ponder: Pope Francis says, “*A love that reconciles and saves begins with listening.*” Where do you witness this in your own life?

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Closing Novena Prayer: A Moment of Grace: A Prayer for Refugees

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 With that same cry.

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 me
And so make me worthy Of the refugee I have found in you. Amen. ~
Courtesy of Catholic Relief Services

The cards were drawn by refugee children at the Holy Cross Retreat Center in New Mexico.

This novena was created on behalf of the National Immigration Focus Group of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States.