



“Remember, You Too Were Once Strangers”

A SOLIDARITY & ACTION VIGIL FOR MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

Updated September 2019

NOTES

- Please feel free to use this resource in its entirety, or you can also adapt it, revise it, or shorten it to fit into another event or specific timeframe.
- You can find the most updated advocacy letter and other resources on our “I am Migration” page: [HTTPS://UNIVERSITY.CRS.ORG/MIGRATION](https://university.crs.org/migration)
- Please reach out to UNIVERSITY@CRS.ORG with any questions.

MATERIALS

- Copies of this solidarity vigil for leader, cantor, readers and person managing PowerPoint
- Audio-visual equipment with Internet access
- Music for songs, *Somos El Cuerpo de Cristo*, by Jaime Cortez, OCP and “*Envía Tu Espíritu*” by Bob Hurd, OCP **OR**
- Music for songs, “*Come and Fill Our Hearts,*” and “*O Lord, Hear Our Prayer,*” by Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community
- PowerPoint Presentation for images and visuals: “Remember, You Too Were Once Strangers”
 - Via Google Drive: [HTTP://BIT.LY/IAMMIGRATIONVIGILPPT2019](http://bit.ly/iammigrationvigilppt2019)
- Optional: Bible, open to Matthew 2:13–14, 16
- Optional: Candles for the space and/or consider having each participant light a candle after they take their advocacy action.
- If handwriting advocacy letters:
 - Baskets to collect letters
 - Pens for participants
 - Paper for participants



PREPARATION

- Invite and prepare cantor to lead [Somos El Cuerpo de Cristo](#), by Jaime Cortez, OCP and “[Envía Tu Espíritu](#)” by Bob Hurd, OCP. OR “[Come and Fill Our Hearts,](#)” and “[O Lord, Hear Our Prayer,](#)” by Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community
- Prepare song sheets with lyrics and make available to participants.
- Set up the vigil space:
 - Determine where you’d like the candles and how you will invite participants to engage with the candles, if at all.
 - Place baskets near the candles (if handwriting advocacy letters).
 - Test PowerPoint presentation and video.
 - Place a Bible and one copy of this solidarity vigil at the podium or lectern.
 - Distribute paper and pens (if handwriting advocacy letters).
- Select and prepare leader and readers:
 - Give each reader a copy of this solidarity vigil with their part highlighted.
 - Option: Instead of having one reader lead the “Refugees in Scripture reflection” section at the lectern, invite seven people to each read one of the excerpts. Direct them to be seated throughout the congregation, and to stand and read their parts at the appropriate time.
- Prepare someone to click through the PowerPoint presentation as instructed in the prayer service.
- Prepare for the advocacy portion of the vigil. Choose from the following options, then be sure to prepare your script accordingly. You may also want to add an additional slide to the PowerPoint with further instructions.

Option 1 - Online Letters: Instruct participants to sign the online letter, which can be navigated to in 3 ways:

- At this link: [HTTPS://SUPPORT.CRS.ORG/ACT/CRSU-MIGRATION](https://support.crs.org/act/crsu-migration)
- By navigating to [WWW.UNIVERSITY.CRS.ORG/MIGRATION](http://www.university.crs.org/migration) and selecting the “Advocate to Congress” button.
- By texting “I am Migration” to 306-44. Participants will receive a direct link to the letter in response.

In all cases, please recommend that participants personalize their letters to members of Congress for greater impact.

Option 2 – Handwritten Letters

- HOW-TO: Use this template and how-to guide:
[HTTPS://UNIVERSITY.CRS.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/UNIVERSITY%20REFERENCE_LETTER%20WRITING.PDF](https://university.crs.org/sites/default/files/university%20reference_letter%20writing.pdf)
- CONTENT: For the content of the letter, use information from the most recent action alert, which you can find here: [HTTPS://SUPPORT.CRS.ORG/ACT/CRSU-MIGRATION](https://support.crs.org/act/crsu-migration).
- DELIVERY: Decide how you will share these letters with your members of Congress.
 - Your letters will have the most impact if they are hand delivered to the local offices. Check out these tips on how to set up a “Voice Your Values” meeting with your members of Congress: [HTTPS://UNIVERSITY.CRS.ORG/CONTENT/VOICE-YOUR-VALUES-MEET-MEMBERS-CONGRESS](https://university.crs.org/content/voice-your-values-meet-members-congress). If you select this option, you will want to make sure all participants write their letters using their local address in the district of the university.
 - Mail the letters to their offices. If you select this option, participants can write their letters using their local address in the district of the university or their permanent home address. Be sure you send the correct letters to the correct members of Congress.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 1.

Welcome and opening prayer

LEADER: We gather together at a pivotal moment in time when there are more vulnerable people on the move than at any other point in history. More than 70 million migrants, refugees and others have fled their homes as a result of persecution, conflict, violence and other life-threatening situations. As prophetic advocates in our community, we name the injustices our displaced brothers and sisters experience, and we lead the way to hope and justice through prayer and action. We recognize that many displaced families are forced from their homes and that we have a responsibility to not only welcome them, but to demand change. It is especially important for us to come together and make our voices resound in support for all who have been displaced or forced to migrate, championing the sacredness and dignity of every human life.

As we begin this vigil, we remember that throughout Scripture, God has given us examples to follow. God stood with refugees, even to the point of becoming a refugee himself, in the person of Jesus. And so we pray...

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ...

[English Option]

Almighty God,

Millions of our brothers and sisters
are on the move around the world,
Not by choice, but by desperation.
We encounter their stories in the news
And their faces in members of our communities.

We pray that we may lead the way to bring
about God's vision of peace and justice for all.

For those forced to flee violence,
We pray they find safety.
For those seeking economic opportunity,
We pray they find secure livelihoods.
For those trying to protect their families,
We pray they find communities to embrace
them.
For those searching for peace and hope,
We pray that we may accompany them.

We are called to be prophetic advocates in this
world, to call out injustice and be heralds of love.
We pray that all migrants, refugees, and
displaced persons may find safe and loving
communities and may find opportunities to
thrive.
And we pray that we may have the courage to
stand and act in defense of human dignity for all.

Mary, Queen of Peace, *pray for us*
Amen.

[Spanish Option]

Dios todopoderoso,

Millones de nuestros hermanos
están en movimiento alrededor del mundo,
No por elección, sino por desesperación.
Encontramos sus historias en las noticias
Y sus rostros en los miembros de nuestras comunidades.

Oramos para que podamos liderar el camino
Para lograr la visión de Dios de paz y justicia para todos.

Por aquellos obligados a huir de la violencia,
Oramos para que encuentren seguridad.
Por aquellos que buscan oportunidades económicas,
Oramos para que consigan medios de subsistencia seguros.
Por aquellos que intentan proteger a sus familias,
Oramos para que puedan encontrar comunidades que los
acepten.
Por aquellos que buscan paz y esperanza,
Oramos para que podamos acompañarlos.

Estamos llamados a ser profetas en este mundo,
denunciando la injusticia y siendo mensajeros del amor.
Oramos para que todos los migrantes, refugiados, y
personas desplazadas puedan encontrar comunidades
seguras y amorosas así como la oportunidad de salir
adelante.
Y rezamos para que tengamos el valor de ponernos de pie
y actuar para defender la dignidad humana de todos.

María, Reina de la paz, *ruega por nosotros.*
Amén.

Opening song

CANTOR TO LEAD: *Come and Fill Our Hearts*, by Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community [*English option*] OR *Somos El Cuerpo de Cristo*, by Jaime Cortez, OCP [*Spanish option*]

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 2.

Gospel Reading

[English Option]

READER ONE: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

When [the magi] had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.”

Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt ...

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi.

The Gospel of the Lord,

RESPONSE: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ.

[Spanish Option]

READER ONE: Una lectura del Evangelio de Mateo:

Después de marchar los Magos, el Ángel del Señor se le apareció en sueños a José y le dijo: Levántate, toma al niño y su madre y huye a Egipto. Quédate allí hasta que yo te avise, porque Herodes buscara al niño para matarlo.

José se levantó; aquella misma noche tomó al niño y a su madre, y partió hacia Egipto...

Herodes se enojó muchísimo cuando se dio cuenta de que los Magos lo habían engañado, y fijándose en la fecha que ellos habían dicho, envió a matar a todos los niños menores de dos años que había en Belén y sus alrededores.

Palabra del Señor,

RESPONSE: Te Alabamos, Señor

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 3

Refugees in Scripture Reflection

LEADER: We will listen now to passages throughout Scripture that give very clear instructions about how we should treat the refugees in our midst. After a passage is read, we will say together: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

[Note: One option is to divide the passages among 7 readers and invite them to sit scattered throughout the congregation and stand to read their parts.]

READER TWO: You shall not oppress a resident alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 23:9)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

READER TWO: Cursed be anyone who deprives the resident alien, the orphan or the widow of justice! And all the people shall answer, "Amen!" (Deuteronomy 27:19)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

READER TWO: You shall have but one rule, for alien and native-born alike. I, the LORD, am your God. (Leviticus 24:22)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

READER TWO: I will draw near to you for judgment, and I will be swift to bear witness against sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers, those who deprive a laborer of wages, oppress a widow or an orphan, or turn aside a resident alien, without fearing me, says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3:5)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

READER TWO: Listen to my prayer, LORD, hear my cry; do not be deaf to my weeping! For I am with you like a foreigner, a refugee, like my ancestors. (Psalms 39:13)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

READER TWO: So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

READER TWO: Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels. (Hebrews 13:2)

RESPONSE: Remember, you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.

LEADER: We remember the journey of our ancestors in faith, the Israelites, who fled from Egypt with Moses to escape slavery. God stood with the Israelites, protecting them from Pharaoh, and accompanying them as strangers in a new land.

God identifies with the refugee even more strongly in the story of the Holy Family. Jesus, the Son of God, became a refugee child when Mary and Joseph departed by night with him and left Israel for Egypt. They

escaped from Israel to avoid the wrath of King Herod, who ordered the massacre of all boys 2 years old and younger.

We keep in mind the journeys of the Israelites fleeing Egypt and of the Holy Family escaping Herod as we now turn to the stories of refugees and migrants in our global community today. We know that these stories are real – that men, women and children with names and lives, hopes and fears, are on the move this very moment. As we listen, we pray that God will open our hearts and move us toward prophetic action.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 4.

Global Migration Stories

READER THREE: After living on the streets, in makeshift tents and moving from one temporary shelter to the next, Jalilah and her family are finally in a safe and secure home.

For the past two years, Jalilah and her husband were seeking refuge with their two young children after they were forced to flee their home in Marawi City in the Philippines. Fighting had erupted between government and radical Islamist forces, and as the bombings got closer, the family and 70,000 others evacuated, hoping to seek safety in neighboring towns.

“My children were crying, and my husband and I were panicking as we saw people running past our house,” Jalilah says. “We only carried some clothes and grabbed our cash before we ran for our lives.” For two years, Jalilah’s family survived on canned food, living in makeshift tent communities and other insecure places. And without official recognition as a displaced family, Jalilah and her family were unable to receive government assistance. “It was okay at first. We got used to it,” says Jalilah. “But I never thought that for two years my children will live in a tent and eat canned goods or instant noodles almost every day.”

READER FOUR: Thousands of families in the Philippines and around the world are displaced due to conflict and violence. Without shelter or consistent access to food, water and services, these families become vulnerable to hunger, exploitation and other dangers. With funding from USAID (the US Agency for International Development), Catholic Relief Services is supporting thousands of displaced families in the Philippines who have been affected by the conflict, including Jalilah, her husband and now-three children. By providing durable and safe temporary shelters and customizing the shelters to fit the needs of each family, CRS is helping those who have been displaced regain dignity, turning shelters into homes. “Compared to what we have experienced in the past two years, we are now so happy and thankful for what we have,” says Jalilah. “It gave me hope and made me a different person.”

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 5.

READER THREE: In El Salvador, as well as in the rest of Central America, young people often struggle to find opportunities for education, work, and leadership. Let’s watch this video about the realities in which they are living, hear about Monica’s experience, and see how CRS is responding. We’ll see how CRS addresses one of the root causes of migration: violence.

PLAY VIDEO: [Helping Youth Thrive in Their Communities](#)

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 6.

READER FOUR: Six years ago, Miguel was severely burned in an accident, but the doctors in Venezuela couldn't help him. He had contracted bacterial infections because of poor conditions in the hospital. The doctors didn't know what he had, and they insisted on amputation. Miguel tried recovering at his mother's home but developed another infection and anemia from malnutrition. Like many others in Venezuela—where the economic and social situation has been deteriorating since 2015—Miguel's family fled to find lifesaving healthcare. With the help of his brother and mother, Miguel made it across the Colombian border to a hospital where doctors treated his infection and malnutrition, and he is now recovering.

READER THREE: To date, 4 million Venezuelans have fled to neighboring countries seeking food, medical care and safety. The World Health Organization reports that Venezuela's health system has been reduced by 85 percent, and infectious diseases such as measles, diphtheria and malaria are on the rise. The average Venezuelan has lost 24 pounds since 2017, and as much as 87 percent of the country's population has been pushed below the poverty line.

Catholic Relief Services is providing help to thousands of people in Venezuela and to those who have migrated to Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago. Working with local Caritas and other partners, CRS is supporting nearly 50,000 Venezuelans affected by the crisis with health care, food, shelter, protection, water and sanitation, and cash.

LEADER: As we listen to these stories, it is easy to feel simultaneously moved and overwhelmed. The needs are vast: We want to help, but where do we start?

The Catholic Church in the United States has been working tirelessly to help more than a million refugees. In Europe, for example, Catholic Relief Services is teaming up with 10 local partners to provide food and relief assistance, as well as shelter, sanitation, medical care and translation services.

CRS is the official international humanitarian organization of the Catholic Church in the United States. With access to a large, committed network of thousands of people from different faiths, CRS is able to respond quickly and adapt our response to the needs facing refugees and others who have been displaced.

In these examples and stories, we've heard a snapshot of how CRS is responding to the needs of our brothers and sisters on the move.

Now it's our turn. We, too, can collaborate in this mission by supporting people like Jalilah, Monica and Miguel. We can use our voices and our leadership here in the US to call for sustainable change.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 7.

Lead the Way: Advocacy

LEADER: Pope Francis has said, "An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal—always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it ... If indeed 'the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics,' the Church 'cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice'" (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 183). We can lead the way and care for displaced families in our midst by contributing to the work of organizations like Catholic Relief Services, by volunteering to support local agencies that assist migrants and refugees in our own communities, and by using our power through our democracy, where our voice matters.

A person becomes displaced every two seconds, and there are nearly 30 million refugees in the world—the most in world history. We must ask our government to do all in its power to help organizations meet the immediate needs of those on the move and to address the root causes of migration that force people to flee their homes. We've learned about several of these push factors through the stories of Monica, Jalilah, and Miguel. As we reflect back on the poverty and violence they've experienced, we are called to advocate for policies that can help bring justice and peace not only to our brothers and sisters who have been displaced, but also to their home countries. Let us lead the way toward a brighter future for all.

NOTES:

- Prepare your script ahead of time to instruct participants through your chosen advocacy method. You may also want to add an additional slide to the PowerPoint with further instructions.
- If you are using candles, plan to instruct participants accordingly.
- CANTOR: Lead "[Come and Fill Our Hearts](#)," by Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community [*English option*], OR "[Envía Tu Espíritu](#)" by Bob Hurd [*Spanish option*] during letter signing.

Option 1 - Online Letters: Instruct participants to sign the online letter, which can be navigated to in 3 ways:

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Option 2 – Handwritten Letters

- HOW-TO: Use this template and how-to guide: [HTTPS://UNIVERSITY.CRS.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/UNIVERSITY%20REFERENCE_LETTER%20WRITING.PDF](https://university.crs.org/sites/default/files/university%20reference_letter%20writing.pdf)
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CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 8.

Closing Petitions and Prayer

SONG: O Lord, Hear My Prayer, by Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community.

LEADER: Let us close our vigil in prayer, attentive to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, giving us the courage to be even more prophetic leaders and advocates.

READER FIVE: Our response to the petitions will be sung. We sing together:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. When I call, answer me. O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me.

READER FIVE: For displaced people around the world: that their immediate needs for food, shelter and safety will be met and that they will also be given the opportunity to find work, put their children in school, and forge a new way forward, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer ...

READER FIVE: For an end to violence and that countries ravaged by war and conflict will be able to rebuild peaceful societies, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer ...

READER FIVE: For all who have died caught in the crossfire of war, or on their journeys to escape violence, especially refugees fleeing Syria, Central America and Bangladesh, that they may rest in God's eternal love, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer ...

READER FIVE: That world leaders will work together to promote world peace and support all who are displaced, wherever they may be, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer ...

READER FIVE: For all of us gathered here, that we will commit to building a culture of radical hospitality by urging our family, friends and community to open our hearts and our doors to refugees in need, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer ...

LEADER: God of all people, throughout history, we have witnessed how your heart moves with compassion for the stranger. We pray that we will embrace refugees as you have, and that we will never allow indifference or fear to extinguish the light of love. Send us with your spirit as we lead the way to bring your compassionate love to others. In your name we pray, Amen.