“Remember, You Too Were Once Strangers”

A SOLIDARITY VIGIL FOR REFUGEES

NOTES

• Please feel free to use this Vigil 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: HTTP://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” (Download PowerPoint)
• Bible, open to Matthew 2:13–14, 16
• 2–4 large candles
• Lighter or matches
• Candle for each participant
• If handwriting/handsigning - letter writing materials
  o Baskets to collect letters
  o Copies of letters to members of Congress personalized for your community.
  o Pens 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:
  - Light the large candles and put the rest of the candles around them in a central space in front of the room/church.
  - Place baskets near the candles (if signing handwritten letters).
  - Test PowerPoint presentation and video.
  - Place a Bible and one copy of this solidarity vigil at the podium or lectern.
  - Put copies of the letter to Congress and pens at each seat or pew (if signing handwritten letters)
- Select and prepare one leader and seven 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 the letters to your members of Congress. Choose from one of the following options.

Option 1 - Online Letters: instruct participants to sign the online letter at this link (which can also be navigated to via [www.university.crs.org/migration](http://www.university.crs.org/migration) and selecting the “Advocate to Congress” button). Participants will need to access the Internet. You can either set up laptops/tablets connected to Wifi or rely on participants to use their smartphones.

Option 2 – Handwritten/Handsigned letters
- COPIES: Each participant will need three copies of the letter: one for each of their two senators and one for their representative.
  - To make copies of the letters, you will need to insert the text from the most recent action alert into the to blank letter template available here to download and adapt.
  - There is also a section, where you should ask attendees to personalize with a closing remark, such as a story or reason in their own words to share why they care.
- ADDRESS: Decide if you will ask participants to use their home or university address.
  - Option 2A - Home Address
    - During the letter-writing section, offer to show participants how to find their members of Congress online at [https://www.confrontglobalpoverty.org/find-members-congress/](https://www.confrontglobalpoverty.org/find-members-congress/), Ask them to enter their ZIP code when prompted. After they enter it, the names of their two senators and representative will pop up. They should write the full names of their senators and representative at the top of each letter.
    - They should put their home address at the bottom of the letter underneath where they will sign their name.
  - Option 2B - University Address
    - Pre-address the letters with the senators and representative information corresponding to your University’s district at the top of the letter.
• Pre-insert the University address at the bottom of the letter underneath where they will sign their name.

• DELIVERY: Decide how you will get your letters to your senators and representative.
  o 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 meeting with your members of Congress.
  o If you are mailing letters to several states and/or districts, be sure to mail the letters separately to each senator and representative. You can find senators’ addresses by visiting www.senate.gov, and representatives by visiting www.house.gov.

• MEDIA & FOLLOW UP: It helps to send along a copy of any press coverage of the solidarity vigil along with the letters. Also, be sure to follow up with each member

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 1.

Welcome and opening prayer

LEADER: We gather together in solidarity with refugees and migrants who have fled their home countries seeking better lives for themselves and their families. We will pray for people on the move, listen to their stories and act together to ask our government leaders to support them. We recognize that many refugees and migrants are forced from their homes and that we have a responsibility to not only welcome them, but to demand that the push factors of their migration be addressed. It is especially important for us to be together in community, to organize ourselves and our campus and to make our voices even stronger in support of migrants and refugees as our country discerns how to best uphold our Catholic and American values on the sacredness and dignity of human life. We know that those seeking refuge in the U.S. and elsewhere are victims, often of terrorism, violence and poverty, and that our country was founded as a nation of immigrants and refugees.

As we begin this solidarity 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 Spirit1 ...

[English Option]

Merciful and loving Father,
you provided for your people Israel in their exodus from slavery

A promised land that you established for them,

[Spanish Option]

Padre de misericordia y de amor pororcino para su pueblo Israel en su éxodo de la esclavitud

La tierra prometida que estableciste para ellos,
y en Jesucristo provees un acogedor refugio para todos los necesitados.

and in Jesus Christ you provide welcome refuge for all in need.

We ask for your divine protection for all migrants who have left their homes in search of new opportunity in another land. For refugees, who are forced from their homes due to threats of violence, we beseech you to provide them a safe haven.

For migrants trafficked into slavery, grant them rescue, healing, and the strength to start again. For immigrants, who so often leave their family and friends behind, grant them a better life and greater opportunity elsewhere.

We pray in particular for your protection over migrant children who are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse at the hands of others.

We implore you to grant all migrants your protection and lead them to a place of safety.

Be with all those in need with your power to save.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

One God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Te pedimos tu protección divina para todos los migrantes que han abandonado sus casas en busca de nuevas oportunidades en otro país. Por los refugiados, que se ven obligados a partir de sus casas por las amenazas de violencia, te imploramos que les proporcione un refugio seguro.

Por los migrantes traficados en la esclavitud, concédeles el rescate, la sanación y la fuerza para empezar de nuevo.

Para los inmigrantes, que a menudo dejan atrás a sus amigos y familia, concédeles una vida mejor y más oportunidades en otros lugares.

Te rogamos en especial por tu protección sobre los niños migrantes que son vulnerables a la explotación y al abuso en manos de otros.

Te imploramos que concedas a todos los migrantes tu protección y los guíes a un lugar seguro.

Acompáñalos a todos los que necesiten tu poder salvador.

Por nuestro Señor Jesucristo, tu Hijo, que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo,

Dios, por los siglos de los siglos.

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

[Select from the English or Spanish versions offered below.]

[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 buscará 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, ordeno matar 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 refugee—or “alien” or “stranger”—among us. 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 when they fled Egypt they became 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. Today, as we hear about the refugees who are fleeing the Middle East, let us remember the story of these desperate parents, who fled with their infant child, and what belongings they had, to seek safety.

The journey of the Israelites fleeing Egypt, of the Holy Family escaping Herod, and of the refugees leaving Syria, Myanmar, Central America and so many other places around the world today can feel like distant stories that have no bearing on our lives. To enkindle solidarity in our hearts, we need to remind ourselves constantly that these stories are
real— that men, women and children with names and lives, hopes and fears, are suffering at this very moment. We will now listen to some of the accounts of refugees. As we listen, we pray that God will open our hearts and move us toward compassionate action.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 4.

READER THREE: The Basheer family fled Syria when a bomb destroyed their home. Luckily, Khaled Basheer, his wife, and three children survived. Two of them are shown in this photo.

“Can you really say we were lucky?” Khaled asks. “We had to live in a tent in the suburbs of our hometown, Aleppo, from then on—for more than 1 year. And we were frightened every single minute, every day and every night.”

The Basheers feared more bomb attacks. They heard explosions and gunfire nearly every day. “We were also very frightened of an attack by the [Islamic State]. We heard such horrible stories [about] how cruelly they kill innocent people and rape women and young girls,” Khaled says.

At a refugee camp in Serbia, they expressed their hope to make it to Germany. “Daddy promised we will get a nice home there,” 8-year-old Omama says. “And he said there will be good people there.”

Khaled was a construction worker in Syria. He says he’s used to working hard and wants to do that again to provide that nice home.

Omama sometimes tells her father that she feels homesick. His reply: “How can you feel homesick when there is no home any longer?”

READER FOUR: There are 13.1 Syrians in need. The Syrian civil war has led to the displacement of more than 5.4 million outside of Syria, and 6.1 million within. That’s more than half the country’s pre-war population. And that number continues to grow every day.

The number of refugees and migrants entering Europe peaked in 2015 at 1 million, and continues today. Refugee families need food, water, sanitation, protection from the elements and legal advice. CRS has helped more than 1.4 million Syrians across the Middle East and Europe, and continually adjusts services as the situation evolves. Current assistance includes shelter, living supplies, education and trauma counseling for children, food, medical assistance and hygiene and sanitation.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 5.

READER FIVE: We will now watch a video about the effects of separation on a family. 
*Play video Susy’s Story.*

READER FOUR: In the 1980s, political instability, civil war and severe economic hardship resulted in a large influx of migration into the United States from Central America. Migration continued to be driven northward by family unification, natural disasters and persistent political and economic volatility. Today the region continues to struggle with the high prevalence of violence, with some of world’s highest homicide rates and widespread gang violence.² For many families, such as Susy’s, this has resulted in families being separated by long distances at great emotional expense. Can you imagine being separated from loved ones for

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decades, with no clear answer as to when you would see them again?

We will see a video shortly about how CRS is responding to some of the migration push factors in Central America.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 6.

READER SIX: Shetara, 40, a midwife escaping violent attacks on her village in Myanmar, could tell her cousin was just hours away from going into labor. The trouble was, the Rohingya women were on a small boat crossing the Naf river into Bangladesh, after many days of desperate flight through the jungle.

“I knew the baby was coming and I was frightened,” she says. “When Senowara said she was feeling more pain, I told her that she needed to rest immediately, that the baby was going to come in two hours.”

The most urgent need was to get to a place quickly where they could safely deliver the new family member. Their boat finally arrived at the Bangladeshi border.

“We had to find a place,” says Shetara. “We found a place outside someone’s home and people nearby offered tarps that are normally used for making salt... But, there, I delivered her son. I didn’t have any blade so I found a bamboo strip and I sharpened it so that I would be able to cut the cord. I wish I could have had a needle, thread, globes, bandages, cloth, soap and a towel—but I didn’t have any of those things.” Senowara’s son was healthy, but the new mother was struggling with the experience—more than the pain, she says, she was overwhelmed with a sense of shame.

READER FOUR: Escalating violence has forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people from their homes in western Myanmar. In just three months leading up to November 2017, more than 600,000 people have fled into neighboring Bangladesh.

 Refugees are living in crowded, unsanitary camps, completely dependent on aid to meet their most basic needs. By the time they reach the camps, families have used most of their savings on their transportation and shelters, often made out of no more than bamboo and recycled plastic sheets. CRS is helping Caritas Bangladesh provide emergency relief to 70,000 refugees. Efforts are expanding to meet escalating needs.

CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 7.

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 over a million refugees. In Europe, for example, where the numbers of refugees have surged in the past year, Catholic Relief Services is teaming 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.

In the examples and stories we just heard, we shared a snapshot of how CRS is responding to these various experiences of migration, no we will now watch a short video that offers a snapshot of the Catholic Church’s response to the some of the push factors of migration.

PLAY VIDEO: Helping Youth Thrive in Their Communities
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 that 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 put our faith in action and care for refugees in our midst by contributing to the work of organizations like Catholic Relief Services, by volunteering to support local agencies that assist refugees in our own communities, and by using our power through our democracy, where our voice matters. We can ask our government to do all in its power to help organizations meet the immediate needs of refugees, 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 the Basheer family, Susy and her children, and Shetara and Senowara. 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 migrants, but also to their home countries.

[IF DOING ONLINE OPTION]

Please use your smart phone, laptop or tablet and navigate to www.university.crs.org/migration and select the “Advocate to Congress” button on the page. You will be asked to enter your information. Remember to personalize your message on why this is important to you! You can edit the letter within the text box. An email will be sent to both your senators and your representative.

[IF HANDWRITING LETTERS WITH HOME ADDRESS]

In a moment, I will distribute three letters and a pen to each person: one for each of your senators and one for your representative. If you do not know your senators and representative, use your smartphone or laptop/tablet to navigate to confrontglobalpoverty.com/toolkit. Scroll down and click on the “Find” button under the “Meet with Congress” section. Simply enter your zip code. You may need to enter your full address if your representative’s information does not populate. Remember to personalize your message on why this is important to you! Sign your name and write your home address on the bottom.

[IF HANDWRITING LETTERS WITH UNIVERSITY ADDRESS]

In a moment, I will distribute three letters and a pen to each person: one for each of each of the senators and one for your representative who represent our University. Remember to personalize your message on why this is important to you! Sign your name at the bottom.

[Tell the group how the messages will be delivered, either by mail to district offices or in person.]


[Once everyone is holding a lighted candle, dim the lights.]
CUE POWERPOINT SLIDE 9.

Closing petitions and prayer

SONG: O Lord, Hear My Prayer, by Jacques Berthier, Taizé Community. Note: The response to the petitions will be led by a cantor.

LEADER: This room is now lit by our collection of candles. While no single candle could offer enough light on its own, the effect of all of the light together is to help illuminate the darkness. We keep this in mind as we continue to stand in solidarity with refugees. As we close our solidarity vigil, we keep our candles lit, and we offer one amplified prayer and song.

READER SEVEN: 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 SEVEN: For refugees all over 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 SEVEN: For an end to the violence caused by religious extremism in the Middle East, and that the countries wrecked by war will be able to rebuild a peaceful society, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer …

READER SEVEN: For all those people who have died caught in the crossfire of war, or on their journey out of Syria to escape the violence, that they may rest in God’s eternal love, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer …

READER SEVEN: That world leaders will work together to help end the violence in the Middle East and to address the needs of the men, women, and children who are flooding out of Syria and Iraq into other countries, we pray:

CANTOR/ALL: O Lord, hear my prayer …

READER SEVEN: 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 …

READER SEVEN: God of all people, throughout history, we have witnessed how your heart moves with compassion for the stranger. We pray that we will embrace the refugee 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 go out to bring your compassionate love to others. In your name we pray, Amen. [All extinguish candles.]