

MIGRANTS

We are the spiritual descendants of famous migrants. Abraham and his family migrated from Mesopotamia northwest to Assyria, then southwest to Canaan. Jacob and his sons went from Canaan down to Egypt to escape famine. About 400 years later, Moses led the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, wandering the desert for 40 years before arriving at the Promised Land – back to where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob once lived.

Mindful of that history, the Torah commands:

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. (Ex. 23:9)

When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God. (Lv 19:33-34)

God ... loves the resident alien, giving them food and clothing. So you too should love the resident alien, for that is what you were in the land of Egypt. (Dt. 10:18-19)

“You shall not deprive the resident alien or the orphan of justice ... For, remember, you were slaves in Egypt, and the Lord, your God, redeemed you from there; that is why I command you to do this. (Dt. 24:17-18)

Jesus and the Apostles were migrants, traversing the area from Galilee to Jerusalem, and eventually traveling throughout the Roman Empire proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Many of America’s settlers were European refugees seeking religious freedom.

In recent decades, our popes have strongly advocated for caring treatment of migrants, both as a Christian expression of charity and as a humanitarian recognition of the dignity and rights of all people. Earlier this year, Pope Leo XIV noted:

In its international relations and actions, the Holy See consistently takes a stand in defense of the inalienable dignity of every person. It cannot be overlooked, for example, that every migrant is a person and, as such, has inalienable rights that must be respected in every situation. Not all migrants move by choice, but many are forced to flee because of violence, persecution, conflict and even the effects of climate change, as in various parts of Africa and Asia. In this year, which also marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the International Organization for Migration, I renew the Holy See’s hope that the actions taken by States against criminality and human trafficking will not become a pretext for undermining the dignity of migrants and refugees. (Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps, 1/9/26)

Last October, Pope Leo said we should welcome and nourish migrants as living examples of hope in their persistence at pursuing a better life.

Migrants and refugees can be privileged witnesses of hope through their resilience and through their trust in God. Often they maintain their strength while seeking a better future, in spite of the obstacles that they encounter. As we prepare to celebrate the Jubilees of Migrants and of the Missions in this holy Jubilee year, I encourage you to lift up such examples of hope in the communities of those whom you serve. In this way, they can be an inspiration for others and assist in developing ways to address the challenges that they have faced in their own lives. (Address to Participants in the Meeting "Refugees & Migrants in Our Common Home," 10/2/25)

Pope Leo presented the situation of migrants in our midst as an opportunity for us to give witness to the Gospel, to become missionaries for Christ not by leaving our communities for distant lands, but by welcoming those from distant lands into our communities, where we can exhibit for them the Christian virtues by which we live.

Today a new missionary age opens up in the history of the Church. ... The story of so many of our migrant brothers and sisters bears witnesses to this: the tragedy of their flight from violence, the suffering which accompanies it, the fear of not succeeding, the perilous risk of traveling along the coastline, their cry of sorrow and desperation. Brothers and sisters, those boats which hope to catch sight of a safe port, and those eyes filled with anguish and hope seeking to reach the shore, cannot and must not find the coldness of indifference or the stigma of discrimination!

Mission is not so much about "departing", but instead "remaining" in order to proclaim Christ through hospitality and welcome, compassion and solidarity. We are to remain without fleeing to the comforts of our individualism; to remain so as to look upon those who arrive from lands that are distant and violent; to remain and open our arms and hearts to them, welcoming them as brothers and sisters, and being for them a presence of consolation and hope.

There are many missionary men and women, but also believers and people of good will, who work in the service of migrants, and promote a new culture of fraternity on the theme of migration, beyond stereotypes and prejudices. But this precious service involves each one of us, within the limits of our own means. As Pope Francis affirmed, this is the time for all of us to let ourselves be "permanently in a state of mission" (Evangelii Gaudium, 25). (Homily, Jubilee of Migrants, 10/5/25)

In their 2025 USCCB Special Pastoral Message on Immigration, America's bishops spoke out "in defense of God-given human dignity" of all and against policies that have vilified immigrants, separated families, and generated a climate of fear and anxiety in communities. They appeal for people of good will to work together for "a meaningful reform of our nation's immigration laws and procedures."