

Pilgrims of Hope: A Pastoral Reflection on Immigration

Small Group Study Guide

Recommended format for each session:

- Plan for 60 - 75 minutes
- Opening prayer
- Read selected excerpts aloud
- Group discussion
- Closing prayer and action steps

Prayer for Migrants and Refugees

Lord Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes, you provided more than food for the body, you offered us the gift of yourself, the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst! Your disciples were filled with fear and doubt, but you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd, welcoming them as brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds.

Lord Jesus, help us by your grace,

- *To banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister;*
- *To welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs;*
- *To realize that you call all people to your holy mountain to learn the ways of peace and justice;*
- *To share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us;*
- *To give witness to your love for all people, as we celebrate the many gifts they bring.*

We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Session 1: Welcoming the Stranger—Faith, Dignity, and the Church's Witness

Focus:

- Theological foundation of human dignity
- Catholic Social Teaching on migration
- Scriptural and magisterial sources (including *Exsul Familia*, Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis)
- Political rhetoric vs. Gospel truth

Selected Excerpts:

- Introduction
- Section II: Catholic Social Teaching
- Section III: The U.S. Immigration Context

Discussion Questions:

1. The letter says immigration is a “deeply moral matter.” What makes it so?
2. How does the Church balance the right of nations to regulate borders with the dignity and rights of migrants?
3. Pope Benedict XVI warns against relativism of truth. How do false narratives about immigration distort our moral vision?
4. What responsibilities do we bear as citizens and Catholic Christians when laws or rhetoric undermine human dignity?
5. How does this teaching challenge or affirm your current understanding of immigration?

Action:

Close with USCCB's Prayer for Migrants and Refugees. Participants are encouraged to search out and learn about a local organization serving migrants and/or to reflect on ways they can take action in responding to the letter's call to be more welcoming in more concrete manners.

Session 2: Pilgrims of Hope—Discipleship, Mary's Witness, and the Eucharistic Call to Justice

Focus:

- The Christian call to action and accompaniment
- Mary as migrant and Queen of Refugees
- Eucharist, hospitality, and conversion
- Jubilee spirituality and sustained hope

Selected Excerpts:

- Section IV: Living the Faith
- Mary's Section
- Section V: Conclusion

Discussion Questions:

1. The letter insists that "the Gospel demands action." What might that look like in your life or parish?
2. In what ways is Mary a model for our response to migrants today?
3. What does it mean to journey as "pilgrims of hope," and how does the Eucharist form us for that journey?
4. Where is the Spirit inviting you to deeper conversion—intellectually, spiritually, or practically?
5. How might your small group or parish sustain this reflection beyond these sessions?

Action:

Close with USCCB's Prayer for Migrants and Refugees, and consider writing a letter of support or advocacy to a local policymaker.