

# Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation News

## Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours



Migrants from Gaza flee from violence

### International Migrants Day

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"The decision to migrate should always be free, yet in many cases, it is not. Conflicts, natural disasters, or more simply the impossibility of living a dignified and prosperous life in one's native land is forcing millions of persons to leave."

Pope Francis

It was the donkey in the photo above that captured my attention. At this time of year we are accustomed to seeing religious art depicting a family migrating on a donkey. First, for a trip to be counted in a census in Bethlehem and second, a trip to Egypt with a newborn baby to escape violence. How profound and heart-wrenching that during this Advent 2023, images of families in the land we call Holy are also fleeing for their lives as violence continues between Israel and Palestine.

In many cases a migrant's journey is a dangerous one and during this season of Advent there are more than 90 million people on the move escaping violence, gangs, poverty and the effects of climate change. As we journey spiritually during this season of Advent in anticipation of celebrating the birth of Jesus, let us hold all migrants in our hearts and do all we can to cultivate a culture of compassionate welcoming for them. As we commemorate International Migrants Day let us cry out against the injustice of any immigration system that denies the human dignity of those fleeing for whatever reason and commit ourselves to bring about God's kingdom where all are welcome, all are fed, all are sheltered, and all have a safe place to call home.

### December JPIC Days of Remembrance



December 1  
World AIDS Day

December 2  
Anniversary of the Deaths of  
Maura Clark, Ita Ford, Dorothy  
Kazel and Jean Donovan

International Day  
for the Abolition of Slavery

December 10  
Human Rights Day

December 18  
International Migrants' Day

December 20  
International Human Solidarity  
Day

### Advent - Week 1 Migrants Fleeing Violence

"Let us spare a thought for the many people who fall victim to war and flee their homelands. Let us think about those migrants who set out on that path toward freedom and end up on the street or in the sea. Let us consider Jesus in the arms of Joseph and Mary, fleeing; and may we see in him each of today's migrants." Pope Francis



### A Mother's Story

Night after night for six weeks, Erika Hernández knelt outside her home in central Mexico and prayed: "Please, God, don't let my son turn into a criminal." "I prayed a lot. I fasted. My faith was huge," said the 46-year-old woman, fearing her son would be forcibly recruited by a criminal organization.

It didn't take long for God to listen, Hernández said. By early June, after being kidnapped by members of the Familia Michoacana drug cartel near Mexico City, her son escaped and the family fled north hoping to cross in the United States. Before her son's kidnapping, the idea of migrating to the United States had never crossed Hernández's mind. Her family owned cattle and several tracts of farmland. They had a good life. Source: [borderreport.com](http://borderreport.com)

More than 1 million people were uprooted from their homes in Central America by the end of 2022 due to violence, insecurity and persecution, mainly by criminal organizations. El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have some of the highest rates of violence in the world.

**Advent – Week 2**  
**Journey with Climate Change Refugees**

“When people are driven out because their local environment has become uninhabitable, it might look like a process of nature, something inevitable. Yet the deteriorating climate is very often the result of poor choices and destructive activity, of selfishness and neglect, that set humankind at odds with creation, our common home.”  
 Pope Francis



**A Climate Refugee from Chad**  
 “Migration has now become an inevitable method of adaptation for us ... As a means of survival for us and our animals, we are forced to continuously migrate despite all the risks involved. This is our form of adaptation. We have always mastered it, but if nothing is done to ensure the safety of our space and activities, we risk, one day, being forced to abandon our way of life and join the swelling ranks of the unemployed in the city.”

UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the number of people forced to leave their homes because of climate-crisis-related events over the last 11 years has reached 21.5 million.



In recent years, conflict, war, insecurity, and the effects of climate change have heavily contributed to forced migration whether within countries or across borders. In 2020 over 281 million people were international migrants while over 59 million people were internally displaced by the end of 2021.

**Advent – Week 3**  
**Migrants Seeking Better Life**

There has been a tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from poverty.

They are not recognized by international conventions as refugees; they bear the loss of the lives they have left behind, without enjoying any legal protection whatsoever. LS #25



**Poverty-driven migration**

Luz, a woman from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, had a degree in marketing, a good job at a bank and a home in a gated community where she was raising two sons as a single mother. When the pandemic began, her salary at the bank was cut by 65% and she took out a \$200 cash loan to cover basic expenses. The lenders began extorting her after she had paid off the loan and forced her to pay them approximately \$3,000 as they stalked her, photographed her coming and going to work and made death threats. She tried to report the crime at two separate police stations but was told at both to keep paying. While family support helped her cope with the greatest dangers, it was not enough to stop the extortion. Several months later in Ciudad Juárez, she was still suffering sadness, depression and guilt from having left one son in hiding in Honduras because she could not pay to travel with both.

This woman went from a good job to refugee status in a matter of months due to some bad actors and a police force unable to enforce the law. No wonder she fled.

Source: NCR

**What it means to be a refugee...**

“A person with a sad and tired face carrying with him a bag full of exhaustion of a long, long journey.”  
 Abdullah from Syria

“A refugee is not an identity or a social status; it is when you are forced to leave and find yourself in a place and in a moment you don't choose.”  
 Yagoub from Sudan

“I feel I have been forgotten by the world and left stranded in a refugee camp where my life – and the lives of thousands of others like me – is whittling away.”  
 Ndizeye from Malawi

“What is it like to be a refugee in a camp? The children run around while parents try to keep busy with some of the ordinary duties of parenting. I watched young adults sitting, waiting. So many of the young men in the camp have no work and no opportunity for school. They just sit and wait.”

Sister Rosemarie Lilazzo MM, Iraq



Syrian refugees: Mother and child

**Advent – Week 4**

As you participate in Christmas Services this year remember that the birth of the one we celebrate, Jesus, was himself an immigrant. Carry in your heart the stories of all those in this newsletter and the millions more who are traveling a migrant's journey this Christmas.

Commit yourself to some positive action on behalf of migrants in memory of the one whose birth we celebrate on December 25.



**Reflection**

- What is your family's immigration story?
- Why did they choose to migrate?
- Did they have a choice?
- What obstacles did they encounter?
- What type of welcome did they receive?

**International Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee**

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