

**Mass for the 106th World Day of
Migrants & Refugees
September 27, 2020
*LIKE JESUS CHRIST, FORCED TO FLEE***



LITURGICAL SETTING

Today we celebrate the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. The Holy Father has chosen for this day the motto: "Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee." The Message focuses on the pastoral care of internally displaced people, whose numbers today reach more than 41 million around the world. The reflection springs up from the experience of Jesus himself who was forced in Herod's time to flee from his homeland in order save himself. The tragic condition of displaced persons and refugees, marked by fear, uncertainty, and discomforts were also experienced by Lord Jesus in his childhood. The Holy Father regrets that even today millions of families can recognize themselves in this sad reality.

Let us join in prayer with migrants, refugees, internally displaced people and all who are excluded in our society, may we be able to share what we have, leaving no one out of a just society, collaborating to build a just world, one in which everyone is respected and appreciated.



COLLECT

O Lord, no one is a stranger to you, and no one is ever far from your loving care. In your kindness watch over all migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, those separated from their loved ones, those who are lost, and those who have been exiled from their homes. Bring them safely to the place where they long to be and help us always to show your kindness to strangers for those in need. We ask this through Christ our Lord, who also was a refugee and migrant that travelled to another land searching for a home.

Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



FIRST READING

A Reading from the book of the Prophet Ezekiel (Ez 18,25-28)

Thus, says the LORD:

You say, "The LORD's way is not fair!"

Hear now, house of Israel:

Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?

When someone virtuous turns away from virtue to commit iniquity, and dies, it is because of the iniquity he committed that he must die.

But if he turns from the wickedness he has committed, and does what is right and just, he shall preserve his life;

since he has turned away from all the sins that he has committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.

The Word of the Lord



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(PS 25: 4-5, 6-7,8-9)

R. (6a) Remember your mercies, O Lord.

*Your ways, O Lord, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
guide me in your truth and teach me,
For you are God my savior*

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

*Remember that your compassion, O Lord,
and your love are from of old.
The sins of my youth and my frailties remember not;
in your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O Lord.*

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.

*Good and upright is the Lord;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
and teaches the humble his way.*

R. Remember your mercies, O Lord.



SECOND READING

A Reading from the Letter of the Apostle Saint Paul to the Philippians (Phil 2, 1-11)

Brothers and sisters:

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing.

Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but also, for those of others.

Have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.

Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name

which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.

The Word of the Lord.

Alleluia (Jn 10,27)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

*My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord;
I know them, and they follow me.*

R. Alleluia, alleluia

† Gospel (Mt 21, 28-32)

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:
"What is your opinion?
A man had two sons.
He came to the first and said,
'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'
He said in reply, 'I will not,'
but afterwards changed his mind and went.
The man came to the other son and gave the same order.
He said in reply, 'Yes, sir, 'but did not go.
Which of the two did his father's will?"
They answered, "The first."
Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you,
tax collectors and prostitutes
are entering the kingdom of God before you.
When John came to you in the way of righteousness,
you did not believe him;
but tax collectors and prostitutes did.
Yet even when you saw that,
you did not later change your minds and believe him.

The Gospel of the Lord.



PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

P. Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome as members of God's family those who are forced to flee from their homeland, like you were. Open our minds and hearts to meet them so that we may understand their struggles to live with dignity.

To each prayer we will respond.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

For all bishops in our Church, that they may be encouraged by our prayers and support to lead God's people in building a culture that respects the human dignity of all migrants, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

For all Catholics, that God may inspire us to take action in our local communities to support and protect migrants and to advocate on their behalf, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

For unaccompanied migrant children, that God protect them on their journey and safely reunite them with their families, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

For our neighbors, coworkers, friends, fellow Christians, and all people, that they may grow in their awareness of the issue of migration and become a voice in the public square calling for greater protections for these populations, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

For migrant workers, that they may labor in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

For migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, and all other strangers in our midst, that they may find strength in our concern for justice and feel the warmth of our love, we pray to the Lord.

R. Lord may your Word lead us always.

P. Lord our God open our hearts so that we can be close to serve our brothers and sisters who like Christ are forced to flee.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY



PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, you who wanted your Son to die in order to reunite all men and women scattered throughout the world into one family, grant us that this Eucharistic sacrifice, a sign of unity and peace, make us all recognize our fraternal bond as brothers and sisters.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

You, Lord, who have fed us with the same bread and the same chalice, arouse in us a new spirit of human understanding and evangelical hospitality towards those who are far from their family and their homeland, so that someday You may gather us all in your house forever. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/092720.cfm>

The Collect Prayer was taken from the website of the Archdiocese of Hobart <https://hobart.catholic.org.au/content/prayer-migrants-refugees-asylum-seekers>

The prayer of the faithful was taken from the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)

<https://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/national-migration-week/upload/NMW-Petitions.pdf>



PRAYER FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Father, you entrusted to Saint Joseph what you held most precious: the child Jesus and his Mother, in order to protect them from the dangers and threats of the wicked.

Grant that we may experience his protection and help. May he, who shared in the sufferings of those who flee from the hatred of the powerful, console and protect all our brothers and sisters driven by war, poverty and necessity to leave their homes and their lands to set out as refugees for safer places.

Help them, through the intercession of Saint Joseph, to find the strength to persevere, give them comfort in sorrows and courage amid their trials.

Grant to those who welcome them some of the tender love of this just and wise father, who loved Jesus as a true son and sustained Mary at every step of the way.

May he, who earned his bread by the work of his hands, watch over those who have seen everything in life taken away and obtain for them the dignity of a job and the serenity of a home.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, whom Saint Joseph saved by fleeing to Egypt, and trusting in the intercession of the Virgin Mary, whom he loved as a faithful husband in accordance with your will.

Amen.



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Introduction

The idea of this outline is to give some ideas that can be used while preaching during the celebration for the World day of Migrants and Refugees. The reflection springs from the Word of God and is enlightened with ideas from the Holy Father's message for this Day.

Parable of the Two Sons

28. *"What is your opinion? -Jesus asked- A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'*

29. *He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went.*

30. *The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go.*

31. *Which of the two did his father's will?" They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.*

32. *When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.*

Regarding the Biblical Text: *This parable forms a set of three:*

- a) The Two Sons to work in the Vineyard.*
- b) The Homicidal Vine Growers,*
- c) The Wedding Banquet*

Jesus used these three parables to comment on the Jewish people of his time, in particular their religious leaders. The parable is interesting because it pits the highly respected leaders of the People, in this case "the Yes-men", against the publicans and prostitutes, "The No-men." However, Jesus speaks of this to highlight the "obedience" of the second son, who answered his father with a "yes", but without fulfilling his will in a cold, public obedience, but without a true commitment; while the first son, the "No", experiences a true conversion at heart and fulfills the will of his Father.

The Leaders of the Jewish people apparently obeyed God and gave their “Yes” but it was an empty yes. They were unable to recognize John the Baptist, who was sent by God, and rejected his message of conversion and his call to work for justice in the world failing to truly accept, in a deep manner, the Will of God.

Prostitutes and Publicans, who were apparently the ones excluded from salvation because of their sinful nature, were capable of converting and accepting the message of salvation; those who said “No” turned around to be the ones who carried-out the Will of God, that is why they go before others. This parable only appears in the Gospel of Saint Matthew, which denotes that the problem of acceptance of the Christian message was extraordinarily strong in the community to which Matthew wrote.

Analysis of the Text

Jesus begins the parable with a question, which is a question that sparks curiosity and collaboration: “What do you think?”

When Jesus begins to speak in this Parable, he talks about 2 children who answer the father's invitation to go to work in the vineyard, apparently and according to the customs of that time, the first son defies the father's authority saying that he does not want to go and the second responds with the courtesy and obedience typical of that time; but Jesus surmises the purpose of the parable in the question he asks: Who did the father's will?

There are 3 characters that appear in the parable: a father and two sons. Those listening to Jesus know that when he speaks of the Father, he is referring to God of whom Israel felt they were the only son. The Firstborn as it appears in the Book of Exodus (4:22) and only one as the prophet Hosea (11: 1) points out; therefore, the two sons is not a familiar text and could even be scandalous.

Why? Because the text speaks of two sons; one represents the Jewish people and the other represents pagans who, in this text, are elevated to the level of “sons.” In the beginning they ignored the message but when they accepted it, they fulfilled the will of the father, while the “others”, the “good children,” accepted the message but did not fulfill it. Matthew's community, in the year 50, already pointed out this prophecy; the pagans had accepted the message while most of the sons and daughters of Abraham had not accepted the Christian message.

One of sons answered in the affirmative to the father's invitation to work in the vineyard but it seems like a response of blind obedience, a response for the appearance of “looking good” but without a basis in the Father's project. Perhaps Matthew was referring to them in Chapter 7:21 when he says: “Not

everyone who says to me: 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven."

It represents the Israelites who had entered the Alliance and its commitments and then reduced them to outside observances concealing their own interests. They are the leaders of the Jewish people, they present themselves as the authentic representatives of the Jewish religiosity, they are the "yes-men", they make public declarations; but they do not do the will of God because they rejected John and his message of conversion that invited them to live in acceptance of a just path, carrying out the will of God.

On the other hand, publicans and prostitutes, public sinners, who officially appear not practicing the commandments of God, the "No-men", accepted the message and were converted. Matthew projects this reality to those who have come from paganism, who have converted and carry out the will of the Father, forming the true Israel. It is not a matter of words and good reputation, but of actions.

Central Idea

The Conclusion of the Parable (Vv. 31b-32): is Jesus' the most scandalous statement: "The publicans and prostitutes will enter the Kingdom of God before you." The Greek verb for "enter" is in the present tense and that means that this statement is a confirmation.

Public sinners do not hide behind any rite or religious system, their condition is clear and evident, that is why they are ahead of those who hide and pretend. The latter feel safe and protected behind these religious masks, but unaware of their reality. They believe themselves just and wholesome and do not realize their remoteness from God's project.

On the other hand, those who feel like sinners know what it means "to be far" from God, and therefore they can change and embrace the project. They feel the need for the Mercy and Love of God and by "offering them the work in the vineyard" they manage to change the initial "no" to a "yes" to conversion. It is not through prayers or indifferent rites that a person is changed, but the yearning that comes when we feel far from God. Knowing how to say "Yes" to God in everyday life means entering into the logic of the Kingdom of God with the whole person, it is not a parenthesis, it is not by parts, it is not a dream, but it is a radical whole that is later manifested, or supported by, external signs or rituals. This is the call of a Christian for the entirety of our life.

The Text Nowadays

According to the Pope's Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees for the year 2020, which is dedicated to the Displaced, it would be necessary to add a "third son" and that son would be us Christians. We are also invited to work in the vineyard. We are called to answer yes, in a clear and decisive manner. Not a temporary yes that may lead us to not fulfill the will of God. The vineyard this year is different. Among all the challenges this year, in addition to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the economic crisis, the poverty and unemployment reality, coupled with instances of racism, there is what Pope Francis has called: the tragedy of the Internally Displaced Persons: «Frictions and humanitarian emergencies, aggravated by climate disturbances, increase the number of displaced people and affect people that already live in extreme poverty. Many countries facing these situations lack the adequate structures to meet the needs of the displaced » (Pope Francis, January 9, 2020).

Not only that, it must be acknowledged that this phenomenon has been present for a long time and that it has not been fully addressed because it has often not been recognized. Our work in the vineyard has several areas in which we could collaborate. Pope Francis recognizes this phenomenon and makes this reflection: "In light of the tragic events that have characterized the year 2020, I extend this Message, dedicated to internally displaced persons, to all those who have experienced and still today continue to live in precarious situations, abandonment, marginalization and rejection due to COVID-19."

In the vineyard of the Lord: "We are called to recognize on their faces the face of Christ, hungry, thirsty, nude, sick, foreigner and imprisoned, who challenges us (cf. Mt 25,31-46). If we recognize him, it will be us who will thank him for having known, loved and served him." Internally displaced persons offer us the opportunity to meet the Lord, "even if our eyes find it difficult to recognize him: with torn clothes, with dirty feet, with a deformed face, with a wounded body, unable to speak our language" (Pope Francis, Homily, February 15, 2019).

Pope Francis wants to add to the four verbs that he used for the Migrant Day 2018: "Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate," six other verbs that should be the specific points of our work in the vineyard:

a) Know in order to Understand. *Today the world, when speaking of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons, speaks of numbers, that, although alarming are impersonal. We are addressing people who need protection and the Gospel Message. You cannot just pray; you must understand the reality to comprehend the situation of the internally displaced.*

b) Become a Neighbor in order to Serve. *Fears and prejudices, which are increasing every day, prevent us from "reaching out" to those most in need. They do not allow us to "approach like neighbors" and serve them with love. To approach is to be able to see the reality of the other as that person perceives it and then they can be served with love.*

c) Reconciliation requires Listening. *This gift of listening has been lost in our world. We cannot serve if we do not listen to what the needs are. Listening is a necessary Christian virtue to continue moving forward. The World needs to hear the cry of the internally displaced to seek paths of reconciliation.*

d) Share in order to Grow. *For the first Christian community, the action of sharing was one of its fundamental pillars. It is not about giving "alms" to calm our conscience. The Pandemic has taught us that we are all in the same boat and sharing is necessary to survival. There is no place for selfishness; to say "yes" but do nothing.*

e) Get Involved in order to Promote. *The paternalistic attitude of wanting to just "give" does not solve problems. Bringing the phenomenon of internally displaced persons out of the darkness to offer them spaces for their own emancipation is a Christian task. Pope Francis says: "The urge to serve others prevents us from seeing their value. If we really want to promote the people whom we help, we have to involve them and make them participants of their own rescue."*

f) Collaboration is essential for Build. *Pope Francis pointed out in his Message: "The construction of the Kingdom of God is a common commitment of all Christians and therefore it is required that we learn to collaborate, without being tempted by jealousy, discord and divisions." It is not about seeing who does more, who has been doing it longer, it is simply about doing the work.*

Therefore, it is important to raise awareness among the assembly about our role in the vineyard. Our response must be a committed "Yes" that leads us to do something for the displaced at different levels.

Perhaps if we begin to listen to the cry of the people and not speak about the phenomenon of internal displacement as "experts" who know everything. Perhaps if we become patient with those who have not heard anything about this topic and show them the reality. Going to the vineyard must challenge us to break-out of our comfort zone, not to give an enthusiastic yes, and then "burn-out" and see that we didn't bear any fruit. It is about seeing the Kingdom of God grow, ending injustices, inequality, conflicts, abuses, migration, human trafficking, racism, and so many oppressive situations that we live through every day. It is about working in the vineyard without letting us be convinced by the world's criteria or settling for the established structures of evil; living in "omission."

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT NUMBERS...

- + ...these are people that if we find them, we can meet them and if we know their stories, we can understand them. Knowledge is a necessary step towards understanding the other...*
- + ...these are migrants and displaced people, who have experienced precariousness with suffering and constant marginalization in their lives...*
- + ...it is about our prejudices, about our refusal to close the distances with migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons that prevent us from serving them with love...*
- + ... it is also about getting closer to others, being close to serve, being willing to take risks, seeing beyond the sense of duty...*
- + ...it is about not being indifferent, about our ability to listen, to have the opportunity to reconcile with our neighbor, with the excluded, with ourselves and with God...*
- + ...it is about growing together, sharing what we have without leaving out the displaced, the refugee, the migrant, realizing that we have the same common concerns and fears, it's about understanding that no one is saved alone...*
- + ... it is about not being indifferent in the building of spaces where they can feel called to protect, promote, embrace, and integrate new forms of hospitality of fraternity and solidarity...*
- + ... it is about our jealousy, discord, and divisions. It is not the time for selfishness, because the challenge we face unites us all, that is why it is required that we learn to collaborate in society, in international cooperation, global solidarity and in local commitment to preserve the common home and build God's Kingdom...*



Blessed John B. Scalabrini, Father of the Migrants

