

Refugee Welcome Cards Project: Liturgical Aides

Sample Bulletin/Pulpit Announcement: For use in week(s) leading up to the project

All over the world, millions of people are attempting to find new homes for their families because of violence, war, and persecution. Did you know that Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden welcomes and resettles about 100 refugees each year here in South Jersey? This important work is one way our church is following Jesus's commandment to welcome the stranger. To help our new neighbors feel at home, the diocese is sponsoring a Refugee Welcome Cards campaign.

[Next week / On an upcoming Sunday / etc.], please see the [bulletin / table at back of church / etc.] for a blank welcome card you'll be invited to complete. These cards will be collected by the parish and then distributed to individuals and families who have recently moved here.

Announcement for week of project

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You can find a blank welcome card [in this week's bulletin / at the table at the back of church / etc.]. Write or draw an encouraging message of welcome, and [drop your completed card in the collection next weekend or return to the parish office / leave with the volunteer at the table]. Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden, will deliver the cards to individuals and families who have recently moved here.

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General Intercessions for Refugees

For refugees—our brothers and sisters who have been uprooted from their homes, forced to search for safety and security in foreign lands, and for compassion and friendship in the faces of strangers, we pray to the Lord ...

That we, who have come to know God through the person of Jesus Christ—a refugee himself—grow in compassion with refugees everywhere, acting and advocating on their behalf, we pray to the Lord ...

That the nations of the world—together with their citizens, the Church and all the world's religions— may work together on behalf of refugees for peace and security in the lands that they flee; and for safety, opportunity and a true Christian welcome in the lands where they seek haven, we pray to the Lord ...

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Homily Helps for Three Sundays in Easter Season

Background Information:

- See the infographic from Catholic Charities about their refugee resettle process, and see the article “11 Things You May Not Know About Refugees” by Catholic Relief Services, for good background information on this vulnerable population:
<http://www.crs.org/media-center/11-things-you-may-not-know-about-refugees>
- Pope Francis quotes that could be used in any homily mentioning refugee resettlement:
 - “Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself... From this perspective, it is important to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare... **Welcoming others means welcoming God in person!**” (2016 Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees)
 - “The Easter message of the risen Christ, a message of life for all humanity, echoes down the ages and **invites us not to forget those men and women seeking a better future**, an ever more numerous throng of migrants and refugees – including many children – fleeing from war, hunger, poverty and social injustice. All too often, these brothers and sisters of ours meet along the way with death or, in any event, rejection by those who could offer them welcome and assistance... before the evil that seems to have the upper hand in the life of so many people, let us hear once again the comforting words of the Lord: “Take courage; I have conquered the world! (Jn 16:33).” (2016 Easter Message)

Practical information about the project that could be included:

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Sunday, April 23 – Second Sunday of Easter (Divine Mercy Sunday)

- In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear about the radical hospitality of the earliest Christians: “they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need.”
- This Divine Mercy Sunday, we are reminded of our call to show similar compassion toward those who are most poor and vulnerable. In the world today, very few communities are more vulnerable than refugees – people who are fleeing their homelands because of violence and persecution.

Sunday, April 30 – Third Sunday of Easter

- Today's first reading and psalm both use the word “paths” several times, and the word “sojourning” appears in the second reading. These set us up for the incredible journey on the Road to Emmaus in today's Gospel.
- On all of our journeys, Jesus walks beside us. Sometimes, these journeys are figurative as we make our way down life's highway with all its turns and surprises. But, other times, these journeys are literal.
- We bear in our minds and hearts these days all those around the world who are undertaking perilous journeys in pursuit of better lives for themselves and their families. We believe that Jesus walks with all these travelers – especially refugees, who are facing unimaginable perils and challenges.

Sunday, May 7 – Fourth Sunday of Easter

- At the end of today's Gospel, Jesus says: “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.” God wants abundant life for us. He wants all his children to flourish, no matter who they are or where they're born.
- We know that today, too many people aren't able to flourish. They are prevented from living well by things like poverty and hunger, war and violence. One particularly vulnerable population today that is striving to live “more abundantly” is refugees, who flee violence and persecution from their homelands in turmoil.