

**"I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME"
TEACH-IN PRAYER SERVICE**

Call to Prayer

As a way of entering into our prayer, call to mind a particular story, person, statistic, policy, or church teaching that touched your heart tonight.

What do you want to say to God about that?

What is God saying to you?

Sit with the conversation between you and God during the musical meditation.



Scripture Reading

Let us listen to what God may be saying to us through Scripture.

Reader 1: "You shall love the stranger, for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:19)

Reader 2: "The foreigner who lives among you must be treated like one of your own. Love them as you love yourself, for you too were a foreigner in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." (Leviticus 19:34)

Reader 1: "You must love the Most High God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27)

Reader 2: "Love never wrongs anyone – hence love is the fulfillment of the Law." (Romans 13:10)

Reader 1: "Continue to love your sisters and brothers. Don't neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Hebrews 12:1)

Reader 2: "I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me. The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters and brothers, you did it for me." (Matthew 25: 35, 40)

Church Teaching

Let us hear what Pope Francis is saying to us as Catholics about our response to the migrants, the strangers in our midst.

The Church, responding to Christ's command to "go and make disciples of all nations", is called to be the People of God which embraces all peoples and brings to them the proclamation of the Gospel, for the face of each person bears the mark of the face of Christ! Here we find the deepest foundation of the dignity of the human person, which must always be respected and safeguarded. It is less the criteria of efficiency, productivity, social class, or ethnic or religious belonging which grounds that personal dignity, so much as the fact of being created in God's own image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27) and, even more so, being children of God. Every human being is a child of God! He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that Providence gives us to help build a more just society, a more perfect democracy, a more united country, a more fraternal world and a more open and evangelical Christian community..

Communal Prayer

ALL: You are Jesus in our midst.

LEFT: You are the God who bears the brunt of the question: “Why don’t you stay where you belong?”

ALL: You are God in our midst.

RIGHT: You feel the red-faced embarrassment when we hear: “Keep your distance, you foreigner, with your different-colored skin and your strange-sounding speech, with your culture and food that are inferior to my own.”

ALL: You are God in our midst.

LEFT: You are the God who journeys with us through the desert, across the river, in the back of trucks or on the tops of trains, through Border Patrol all because of a glimmer of hope that we can protect ourselves and our children from violence, extortion, or slavery.

ALL: You are the God in our midst.

RIGHT: You are the God who sits with us in detention centers fearing that no one will hear our pleas or listen to our stories or give us a chance to explain our circumstances before we are loaded on an airplane and returned to the nightmares we have tried to escape from.

ALL: You are the God in our midst.

LEFT: You are the God who makes himself known to us through the welcome, respect, prayers and love of the community of believers who come to our aid.

ALL: You are the God in our midst.

Table Sharing:

What is one thing you feel called to do to respond to the crisis we have learned about tonight? (See also the handout—Ideas for Action) If you are moved to do so, share that in a few words with others at your table.

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, friend of the Stranger,

Inspire us to be ministers of the Gospel and to see our neighbors in the strangers we meet.

Teach us what it means to love the strangers as we love ourselves.

Forgive us for our selfishness, for our silence when we witness someone being mistreated.

Grant us open arms and open hearts to receive your children trying to find the way to a new life-giving home.

Help us end the misery of children separated from family, of mothers separated from husbands by man-made borders, but not by love.

May they arrive, as you did, to joy and to the benediction of a loving embrace.

Amen.