

Prayer Service for World Refugee Day, June 20 “A Place to Call Home”

OPENING PRAYER

We remember the journey of the Holy Family, who became refugees in Egypt before returning home. We recognize the similar refugee journeys of millions of families in the world today. We pray that the theme of the United Nations World Refugee Day for 2004, “A Place To Call Home,” becomes a reality for these families.

May refugees rebuild their lives in safety and dignity. Where ever possible, may they return to the homes and communities they have left. When they cannot return home because of war, poverty, persecution, may they be welcomed and allowed new lives in new lands. End their homelessness and bring them to safe harbor, Mary, Mother of Refugees.

VOICES FROM EXILE

We weep beside the rivers
And we long for an end to our exile.
We weep and our tears mingle in the waters
That flow by us but do not take us home.

Our children have no roots to nourish them.
Our elders have been lost to us.
The land we cherished is gone.

How long will we wander,
How long will we yearn to return
How long will we weep beside the rivers of exile?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

As the travelers to Emmaus walked, “Jesus himself came up and walked beside them, but they did not recognise him.” The travelers invited Jesus to stay with them, and “while He was with them at the table, he took the bread and blessed it; then He broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were open and they handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him . . .”
(from Luke 24)

We ask forgiveness for the times we have failed to recognize Christ in the strangers on the road; we ask forgiveness for the times we have not welcomed those different from ourselves.

LITANY FOR HOMELESS REFUGEES

For the more than 4 million Palestinians who have been refugees for over half a century,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 2 and a half million Afghanistan refugees,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 580,000 refugees from Burundi,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 505,000 refugees from the Sudan,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 433,000 refugees from Angola,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 429,000 refugees from Somalia,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 415,000 refugees from the Congo,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 400,000 refugees from Iraq,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 372,000 refugees from Bosnia,

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the 348,000 refugees from Vietnam

*Give them a place to call home,
Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

(prayer service continues on next page)

Prayer Service for World Refugee Day (continued)

For the 316,000 refugees from Eritrea,
*Give them a place to call home,
 Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

For the hundreds of thousands of other refugees from
 countries around the world,
*Give them a place to call home,
 Mary, Mother of Refugees.*

SIGNS OF HOPE

“I will make a highway across the mountains and prepare
 a road for my people to travel . . . Sing, heavens! Shout for
 joy, earth! The Lord will comfort his people . . . Look
 around you and see what is happening! Your people are
 assembling, they are coming home.” (Isaiah 49:11-13, 18)

For Now Tev Soeun, who has come home to Cambodia
 after years as a refugee
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For Simon Akatari, who is beginning to rebuild his life in
 Mozambique after living in a refugee camp in Zimbabwe,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For Jasenko Selimovic, who has found a new home in
 Sweden after fleeing Bosnia during the war,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For Alfredo Chivunda, who was born in a refugee camp in
 Zambia, and has returned 14 years later to Angola,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For William Kolong Pioth, who was one of the thousands
 of lost boys in the Sudan, who has received an education
 and a new home in Canada,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For Esperanza Kabiba, who has returned with her family
 to Angola after living for years in a refugee camp in the
 Congo,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For Nolvía Domínguez, who fled from political persecution
 in Chile and now has a family, home, and welcoming
 community in Norway,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For Dr. Joseph Nsengiyumva, who has returned to his
 home in Rwanda to practice medicine after being a
 refugee,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

For the refugees in our local community, in our state, and
 in our country who have been welcomed as we welcome
 Christ,
We rejoice and give thanks to God.

REFLECTION FROM CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

“We call on all who follow Christ not to turn away from
 those who are the strangers on the road, but to see them
 as our brothers and sisters, and to support efforts to help
 them return to their homes, and where this is not possible,
 to welcome them without fear and aid them in creating
 new homes.”

Pontifical Council, “Cor Unum,” 1998

PRAYER FOR PLACES TO CALL HOME*

We pray for roofs that safely shelter refugees.
 We pray for walls that offer security for refugees.
 We pray for rooms in which the dignity of refugees can
 flourish.
 We pray for the beauty of nature to restore the broken
 hearts of refugees.
 We pray for communities that celebrate the presence and
 gifts of refugees.
 Hear our prayers, Joseph, Mary and Jesus.
 Help us see you in all those who have had to flee their
 lands, and grant all refugees the grace and support to
 rebuild their homes and their lives.
 Amen.

* For this prayer, you can cut up pictures of homes and gardens,
 and distribute pieces with doors to one participant or small
 group of participants to bring up when the first line regarding
 doors is read out loud, distribute pieces with windows to bring
 up when the second line is read, etc., etc.

Source: All statistics and factual information are from the United
 Nations High Commission on Refugees

