

Novena For Migrant Families

Summer, 2018



Developed by the Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI)

Supplies needed to hold a Novena for Migrant Families:

- Life size crèche scene, preferably placed outside of church, school, or faith-based organization, and nine candles and matches.
- Ideally a large banner identifying the purpose of the display should be placed behind the crèche scene—e.g. “Novena for Migrant Families” or the Ignatian Solidarity Network Campaign for Hospitality banner, “Immigrants and Refugees Welcome.”
- On each day of the novena the leader for the day should assign readers before beginning. Copies of the Novena for Migrant Families prayer booklet and promotional material (e.g. sample press release, invitation to parishes to participate in the Novena, information on where to order crèche scene and banner) can be downloaded at www.loyno.edu/jsri.

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Introduction

LEADER:

A novena is an ancient Christian devotional practice consisting of prayers and petitions that are recited on nine consecutive days for a special intention. The praying of a novena draws its origin from the practice of the Disciples, who prayed in the upper room for the nine days between the Ascension of our Lord and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

We gather here today to pray a novena for families, particularly migrant families fleeing violence, persecution, and poverty. We have before us a crèche scene, to remind us of the Holy Family, who, like so many migrant families today, were forced to flee grave danger in their homeland so that their precious child could live and thrive. Let us recall the flight of the Holy Family, recognizing that the fear and uncertainty they faced leaving behind all they knew and loved for an uncertain future in another country is what our migrant sisters and brothers are experiencing today throughout the world.

READER 1:

Matthew 2: 13-14.

Now when [the Magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

LEADER:

There is no coincidence here. Jesus and his family lived as refugees for a reason, to be in solidarity with all people in exile and to provide an example to all generations that when we provide love and hospitality to “the least of our brothers and sisters” we are welcoming Christ himself.

Introduction: Candle Lighting

READER 2:

Our belief in a loving and merciful God and the oneness of Human Family lights our way in this troubled world. We light this candle(s) [one for each day of the novena] to symbolize our FAITH in God, HOPE for families separated by poverty, violence, and indifference, and LOVE for God and all Creation.

[Have 9 white candles in 9 glass containers. Light one candle on the first day, two on the second day, etc. Leave candle(s) lit until of the end of each day's prayer service]



LEADER:

The family holds a central place in Catholic Social Teaching. It is in the family where young people first encounter God, form their consciences, and learn moral virtues. The family is the most intimate sphere in which people cooperate, live, and grow. The well-being of society absolutely depends on the well-being of families. ¹

Let us say together the Prayer for Migrant Families, whose unity and well-being are being threatened in our country by increasingly harsh laws and policies. *[If Spanish speakers are present, alternate between English for first stanza, Spanish for second, English for third, etc.]*

Prayer for Migrant Families² *Oración por las familias inmigrantes*

Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of families.
Dios bueno y misericordioso, te agradecemos por el don de las familias

We are grateful for all of the joy and love that they bring into our lives,
Te damos gracias por toda la alegría y el amor que ellas traen a nuestra vida

and we ask that you provide special protection for all families
te pedimos que a todas las familias les des una protección

particularly those who face hardships as they move in search of a better life.
especial particularmente, a las que pasan privaciones cuando se trasladan en busca de una vida mejor

Show mercy to those who travel in danger, and lead them to a place of safety and peace.
Muéstrales tu compasión a aquellos que viajan en medio de peligros y llévalos a un lugar seguro y tranquilo.

Comfort those who are alone and afraid because their families have been torn apart by violence, injustice, and indifference.
Consuela a los que se encuentran solos y temerosos porque sus familias fueron separadas a causa de la violencia, de la injusticia, y de la indiferencia.

As we reflect upon the difficult journey that the Holy Family faced as refugees in Egypt
Mientras que reflexionamos sobre el difícil trayecto que la Sagrada Familia vivió como refugiados en Egipto,

help us to remember the suffering of all migrant families.
Ayúdanos a recordar el sufrimiento de todas las familia inmigrantes.

Continued on next page

Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, and St. Joseph the Worker, her spouse,

Por la intercesión de María, nuestra Madre y de San José Obrero, su esposo,

we pray that all migrants may be reunited with their loved ones

oramos para que todos los inmigrantes puedan reunirse con sus seres queridos

and find the peace and security they seek.

y encontrar la paz y la seguridad que ellos buscan

Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality

Abre nuestro corazón para que podamos ofrecer hospitalidad

for all who come in search of refuge.

a todos los que buscan un refugio

Give us the courage to welcome every stranger

Danos el valor para recibir con agrado a toda persona foránea

as Christ in our midst.

como si fuera Cristo entre nosotros

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

Té lo pedimos por Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, tu Hijo

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

que vive y reina contigo, en la unidad del Espíritu Santo, por los siglos de los siglos Amén.

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Building a Culture of Encounter

LEADER:

Because of the often harsh responses that migrants and other poor and marginalized people experience in their daily lives, Pope Francis has frequently called for a “culture of encounter” to encourage us to be fearless in the ways we look beyond our own needs to the needs of others. The Holy Father made the following appeal to a “culture of encounter” on the World Day of Migrants in 2014:

READER 3:

“A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization—all typical of a throwaway culture—towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world.”

LEADER:

For each day of this Novena for Migrant Families we will strive to build a “culture of encounter” by listening to the testimony of a migrant or a Scripture passage having to do with the theme of migration. *[If an immigrant willing to tell her migration story is present, then invite her to speak briefly on her migration story (e.g. why she left her home country or the challenges she and her family face in the U.S., and/or her hopes and dreams—5 minutes)]*



Day 1: Testimony of Two Migrant Mothers

READER 4:

Testimony of Olivia Caceres, who was separated in November, 2017, from her 1-year-old son at the U.S./Mexico border for three months. After re-uniting she said: “[My son] continued to cry when we got home and would hold on to my leg and would not let me go. When I took off his clothes he was full of dirt and lice. It seemed like they had not bathed him the 85 days he was away from us.”³

“(My son) is not the same since we were reunited. I thought that, because he is so young he would not be traumatized by this experience, but he does not separate from me. He cries when he does not see me. That behavior is not normal. In El Salvador he would stay with his dad or my sister and not cry. Now he cries for fear of being alone.”⁴

READER 5:

Testimony of Angelica Rebeca Gonzalez-Garcia, who was separated from her 7 year-old daughter at the border, and as of July 5, had not been reunited with her:

“They told me to sign a consent form to take my daughter, but that it did not matter whether or not I signed, because they were going to take her either way.”⁵

“[After being told I would never see my daughter again] I cannot express the pain and fear I felt at that point... One of the officers asked me, ‘In Guatemala do they celebrate Mother’s Day?’ When I answered yes he said, ‘then happy Mother’s Day’ because the next Sunday was Mother’s Day. I lowered my head so that my daughter would not see the tears forming in my eyes. That particular act of cruelty astonished me then as it does now. I could not understand why they hated me so much, or wanted to hurt me so much.”⁶

Readings for Each Day of the Novena

[Assign Readers for Each Day]



Day 2: The Cries of Migrant Children Separated from Their Parents

LEADER:

Today we will listen to the cries of migrant children separated from their families. Let us pray for forgiveness for the great harm such a cruel and immoral practice inflicted upon children and their parents:

<https://www.propublica.org/article/children-separated-from-parents-border-patrol-cbp-trump-immigration-policy>

[If possible, connect a portable speaker to smartphone. Play at least first 4 minutes.]

Alternatively, read a statement from local faith leader opposing the separation of children from their parents at the border:

From Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Archdiocese of New Orleans
<https://nolacatholic.org/news/archbishop-aymond-releases-statement-on-immigration>

From Loyola University New Orleans:
<http://www.loyno.edu/news/story/2018/6/20/4112>

From Bishop Joe Vasquez, Bishop of Austin and Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration:
<http://www.usccb.org/news/2018/18-090.cfm>

Day 3: Testimonies of New Orleans Area Immigrants Jose Torres and Leticia Casindo

READER 4:

At a press conference November 15, 2017, on the steps of First Grace Methodist Church in New Orleans, Jose Torres, a 32-year old construction worker from El Salvador, who along with tens of thousands of other undocumented immigrants helped rebuild New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, made a stunning announcement. To expose the cruelty of a system that separates parents from their children and a political narrative that blames immigrants for our nation's ills, Jose declared that he was taking sanctuary in First Grace rather than be separated from his wife and two young daughters by complying with an order of deportation, an order based on a first offense DUI charge that had already been expunged. He told the dozens of supporters and members of the media gathered: "I am tired of being treated like I am disposable... Tired of [ICE] playing with my liberty and my life... I have lived here 14 years, working shoulder to shoulder with others who love this city." With tears in his eyes and his voice shaking, he continued, "Immigration knows that both of my daughters have chronic conditions and that my youngest daughter has suffered from seizures from birth...But they don't care...For these reasons and on behalf of the millions of undocumented families in this country I have decided to take sanctuary."⁷

(Day 3 continued on the next page)

Day 3 Continued

READER 5:

Leticia Casindo, another immigrant leader and like Jose a member of the Congress of Day Laborers also spoke: “Our lives have never been easy... but especially since Donald Trump became president, our community has fallen into a nightmare... Our families are being separated, our children are suffering-- they are not being allowed their right to a family because this administration has decided to make us a scapegoat to distract from the true problems that plague this country. ..It is sad to leave for work in the morning with fear in your heart, sad when every day your children ask is they will see you again that afternoon...”⁸



Day 4: Testimony of Ignacio, an immigrant from Latin America

READER 4:

“It is crazy to cross the dessert by foot. It is suicidal. If the extreme heat and lack of food and water don’t kill you, accidents, snake bites, or crooked coyotes set on robbing you of your life’s possessions will.

We risk death not because we want to, or because we are foolhardy. We risk death for the families left behind. Would you not cross a hundred desserts to feed your child? It may be crazy to cross, but we are not crazy, we are desperate. Even though I am a believer and put my trust in God, I’m still desperate. .. I simply could not provide the basic necessities for my children. I had to cross for their sake...”⁹

“At the safe house... They told us how we would be treated [in the U.S.]... as if we were either invisible or dogs. At first I didn’t believe them, but after being here for three years, they were right.

I live in fear, fear of being caught, fear of being returned, and of course, fear of having to cross the desert again. That is the hardest thing about this... not being able to hug my children, knowing they will grow up not knowing who I am. It’s enough to drive you mad.”¹⁰



Day 5: Testimony of Marcos, a young Honduran migrant, who left Honduras after a hurricane.

[This year President Trump announced he was ending a special legal protection granted to thousands of Honduran immigrants after Hurricane Mitch, known as Temporary Protected Status, TPS.]

READER 4:

“We lost what little we had when the hurricane came. At that point we lost it all. The hurricane took away our corn, it took away our coffee, and it took away our beans. It was total destruction. And with the little bit that was left, no matter how much we planted, there simply was not enough to feed our entire family.”¹¹

“There comes a point when the poverty is so severe, when the desperation is so great, when there is nothing more to lose, that the only option available is to emigrate. After a while, you start getting very hungry. Of course, you don’t want to see your family suffering, so you leave. My family didn’t send me north. Basically, I saw their suffering and I took it upon myself to try to fix the situation. I left my family in the hope of rebuilding our farm. When there is so much suffering, you begin to dream of going up north. ...Still you risk death because you do not want to suffer, and more important, you don’t want to see your family suffer. Who would not sacrifice his life for his family?”¹²



Devastation in Tegucigalpa, Honduras after the passage of Hurricane Mitch.
Source: NOAA

Day 6: Reflection by Fr. Donald Senior, CP, President Catholic Theological Union

READER 4:

[In Galatians 3:28] one arrives at the bedrock of the Christian vision. ‘There is neither Jew nor gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are one in Christ Jesus.’¹³

God’s embrace reaches to the ends of the earth and all its peoples. Here is the ultimate bond that ties the human family together. Before God all are one. Here is the bulwark against an ideology of racial superiority, here is the challenge to the absolute claims of national or cultural boundaries, here is the basis for all human dignity, including the dignity of the stranger in the land—the right of the migrant to cross borders, whether in fleeing danger or seeking opportunity; the obligation to welcome the stranger and provide refuge and respect. For the Christian, all of these commitments flow ultimately from the biblical vision of the human family as one before God.¹⁴

Galatians 3:28

***There is no longer Jew or Greek,
no longer slave or free, no longer male or
female—all are one in Christ Jesus.***

Day 7: Mathew 25: 31-46, The Last Judgement

[Have different readers for each stanza.]

READER 4: When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

READER 5: Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

READER 6: Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

READER 7: “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Continued on next page...

Day 7 Continued

READER 8: Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

READER 9: They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

READER 10: He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

READER 11: Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25:41

He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

Day 8: Testimony of Edelberto at Prayer Service for Immigration Reform, June, 5, 2013, at Notre Dame Seminary

READER 4:

“My name is Edelberto. I came to New Orleans in 2007 to work in the construction industry and help rebuild New Orleans. I am from Nicaragua and am a member of St. Anthony of Padua Church and the Congress of Day Laborers. The Congress fights for the dignity and rights of all workers helping to rebuild New Orleans.

In Jeremiah, as we just read, it says:

*Practice honesty and integrity;
Rescue the victim who has been wronged
From the hands of his oppressor;
Do not exploit the stranger*

I understand the significance of those words. In August, 2011, I was working for a construction company at a site in Kenner. About two dozen of my fellow workers and I had not been paid in two weeks. We went to the office to complain and instead of the company redressing our wrongs we were arrested by ICE in a violent and cruel raid. I can tell you that experience was the worst moment of my life. After spending 56 hours in jail, I suffered the humiliation of wearing an ankle bracelet for 90 days as though I were some kind of an animal. Some of the victims and witnesses from the raid have already been deported.

God sent his son to redeem the world, yet he was condemned and crucified. I feel that immigrant workers in this city are often condemned and crucified. Please continue to pray that the crucifixion of immigrants through deportation and broken families ends, and that the U.S. Congress votes for just and comprehensive immigration reform. Thank you.”¹⁵

Day 9: Story of Irma Lemus, New Orleans area immigrant from Central America

READER 4:

Irma Esperanza Lemus and her husband were packing up their car to leave for a fishing trip with their three children on September 25, 2013, when ICE agents, wearing bulletproof vests and holstered guns, came to their apartment door in Jefferson Parish and began asking them about their immigration status. Both she and her husband, Wilmer, were fingerprinted in an ICE van in front of their house in. Irma was found to have a previous deportation order and was handcuffed and led away in front of her husband and three children. The baby began to cry as did Irma. An ICE agent asked her, “What are you crying about?” Irma responded, “You’re really asking me that? My children are very young. You’re separating me from them and they’re watching while you do it.” The agent responded, “But you aren’t from here. This isn’t your country.”¹⁶



Closing Prayer of Petition for Migrant Families¹⁷

LEADER: We lift our hearts, Lord, and pray, that you give us the strength to realize your vision of justice and love on this earth, knowing that we may depend on your boundless mercy and compassion:

Please respond to each petition:

Lord hear our prayer

LEADER:

For an end to the violence, poverty, and indifference that displaces so many families from their homes and homelands, we pray to the Lord:

Lord hear our prayer.

For the children who were separated from their parents at our border, that they be quickly reunited with their mothers and fathers and know the healing power of your love:

Lord here our prayer

For unaccompanied immigrant children and all those who are overwhelmed by loneliness, poverty, and despair, that they may be comforted through our help and kindness:

Lord hear our prayer

That deportations which separate families cease immediately, and that we all come to a greater appreciation of the contributions of faith, community, and labor of our immigrant sisters and brothers:

Lord hear our prayer

For those who lead our nation, that their hearts are moved to love all people with your love, and that they work to achieve just, compassionate, and comprehensive immigration reform that provides a path to citizenship for our undocumented brothers and sisters while prioritizing family unity and human dignity.

Lord hear our prayer

We have heard the word of God and the testimony of our sisters and brothers.

O God, fill all hearts with the fire of your love and kindle in them a desire for the just advancement of all people, that, through the good things which you bestow upon all, each member of the human family may be brought to perfection, every division may be removed, and equity and justice may be established throughout your Creation.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

[Blow out candle(s)]

Instruction for Last (9th) Day of Novena

On the ninth and last day of the novena distribute the nine candles used for each day of the novena to those gathered. Ask them to use the candles to participate in the “Light in the Darkness: Vigil for Immigrant Families,” developed by the Ignatian Solidarity Network as part of the Jesuit network’s Campaign for Hospitality. Information and prayers for the “Light in the Darkness” prayer vigil may be found at <https://ignatiansolidarity.net/campaignforhospitality/light/>

- Cover artwork by Kelly Latimore. Retrieved from: <https://kellylatimoreicons.com>
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- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] Weishar, S. (December, 2017). Choosing Sanctuary: Excruciating choices for immigrant families. *JustSouth Monthly*. Retrieved at http://www.loyno.edu/jsri/sites/loyno.edu/jsri/files/justsouth_monthly_december_2017_weishar.pdf
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- [10] Ibid.
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- [13] Senior, D. (2008). Beloved aliens and exiles: New Testament Perspectives on migrants. In D. Groody and G. Campese (Eds.), *A promised land, a perilous journey: Theological perspectives on migration*, p. 32. Nortre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
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- [17] This prayer of petition is based largely on the Prayer Service for Immigration Reform, held at Notre Dame Seminary on June 5, 2013. From JSRI files.

About JSRI

JSRI was founded in 2007 by Loyola University New Orleans and the Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province. The mission of JSRI is to promote faith that does justice through research, education, and advocacy on the core issues of race, poverty and migration. See our website at www.loyno.edu/jsri