



La Frontera  
Ministries International Inc.

## International Migrants Day December 18

This day is an opportunity to bring us together as communities of faith and reflect on issues surrounding migration.

### **Matthew 25**

*For I was in need of food, and you gave it to me; I was in need of drink, and you gave it to me; I was foreign, and you took me in; I had no clothing, and you gave it to me; when I was ill, or in prison, you came to me...*

The immigration phenomenon is sparked by complex structural factors such as injustice, poverty, marginalization and violence. Immigration is a sequence of cause and effect, the most common causes are economic, political, social and environmental.

The current phenomenon of Latin Americans immigrating to the United States is greatly due to the desire to reunite families; children looking to join the parents that left them to work in the U.S. These parents had the dream of ameliorating the poverty their families were living in. But now there is another factor: violence. The increase of violence in Central American countries is worrying parents, who send for their children to protect them.

The pilgrimage of hundreds of families towards the United States reminds us of the pilgrimage the Holy Family made thousands of years ago.

The following resource offers an activity and devotional that you can use in your church or Bible study group to use this Christmas to reflect on the issue of immigration.

## Activity: Posada



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Posadas are festivals celebrated in Mexico from the 16th to the 24th of December. This celebration commemorates the pilgrimage of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The Posada can also be an opportunity to reflect on the special love that God has for pilgrims and immigrants, and the hospitality that God demands from us.

The attached material describes how to host a posada.

## Devotional: God's Nation

### Session 1

#### Introductory questions:

Why do you think that there is discrimination against immigrants?

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Why are immigrants considered illegal? What do you feel about this?

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Can you imagine what it feels like to be called illegal?

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#### Readings:

##### **Genesis 1: 27**

"And God made man in his image, in the image of God he made him: male and female he made them."

In the Old Testament, people are infused with a special dignity because God creates humans in his own image. This special dignity of people who are made in the image of God is the basis for the admonitions to care for those who cannot care for themselves, which includes the poor and the sojourner.

##### **Matthew 25:35**

***"For I was hungry, and you gave me meat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in."***

In both Old and New Testaments, there is an emphasis on caring for those in need which not only include the poor, orphans and widows, but also the sojourner and stranger in the land. Jesus communicates that caring for those in need (which includes the stranger) is caring for Jesus himself. (Matthew 25:31-46)

#### Discussion question:



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## Who is your neighbor?

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There is never a person with whom we lock eyes that is not important to God. This idea is summed up in Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself and he demonstrates it with a parable about a Samaritan who helps a Jew even at great danger to himself, and to help out someone who most likely despised him. (Luke 10:27-37)

## Session 2

### Introductory question:

**Can you imagine having to leave your home?**

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### Readings:

God's people in the Old Testament are frequently refugees and immigrants themselves. Abraham is called by God to leave his homeland and go to a new land...as an immigrant. (Genesis 12:1) Jacob flees to Haran in fear of Esau's revenge (Genesis 27:43) and later returns to Canaan with all of his possessions at God's command. (Genesis 31:3) Israel is forced to sojourn to Egypt because of famine (Genesis 46:3) and although God delivers them via Moses and leads them to the promised land, it is through forty years sojourn in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 29:5). God punishes Israel and Judah for their disobedience by sending them into exile to Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4).

### Discussion question:

**What do we say to us these stories of immigration?**

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### Readings:

These immigrations, especially the stay in Egypt, are God's basis for commanding the Israelites to care for those who are aliens, strangers, and sojourners in their own land. God specifically tells them that:

***"You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt..."*** (Leviticus 19:34).



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The New Testament continues with this theme of refugees and aliens when Jesus himself was a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2:14). Jesus was also constantly on the move during his own ministry and was a frequent guest in people's homes and supported by some of the women who followed him. The New Testament also points out that the Old Testament heroes of faith were "strangers and exiles on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13).

"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul." (1 Peter 2:11).

The New Testament never hints that Christians are other than strangers in this world. Christian identity as exiles is continued from the Old Testament into the New and will not be resolved until Jesus comes again.

## Conclusion:

### **What do the Scriptures reveal to us about immigration?**

First of all, people have dignity and worth. Their value as people is not based upon a cost-benefit analysis of what they can provide for a society. Rather, their value is based upon being made in the image of God.

Christians need to ignore the arguments that focus on what immigrants can and cannot do for our country, and focus instead on the fact that they are people made in the image of God and need to be treated as such, regardless of their legal or illegal status. Furthermore, any policies that oppress people and force them into an unjust system disregard this basic human dignity.

Secondly, the identity of the People of God is deeply rooted in their inclusion in the family of God. Their primary identity is found in the Church, not in any national identity or interests. The people of God...are not part of a specific nationality but are chosen by grace in Christ from all nations...national elements cannot dominate the Church (Gal. 3, Col. 3), because the members are one in Christ.

No matter what our position on immigration is, it is time to ask:

- Who are immigrants?
- What are their needs, dreams and fears?
- How does God see them?
- What is the Church's role?

If you want to learn more about this issue, have an immersion experience, or support our work, contact us at:

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