

K-5

MIGRATION

UBUNTU, "I AM BECAUSE WE ARE."

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DISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBOR™

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Art by Brother Michael O'Neill McGrath, OSFS

OBJECTIVE:

Students will be **introduced** to the African Philosophy of Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of community, compassion, and mutual support. They will connect Scripture with the spirit of ubuntu, and also the nativity story with migration. With their families, they can practice and observe examples of ubuntu.

STEP 1: PRAY

Copy the [coloring sheet](#) and have those ready to distribute after prayer. Have crayons, markers, or colored pencils available.

UBUNTU

“I Am Because We Are.”

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: God, please teach us to be people that others can trust.

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: Please help us to be unselfish people.

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: Lord, show us to be respectful of all others.

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: Creator God, help us to be a sharing people.

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: God, show us how to be helpful to others.

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: God, help us to see and be glad that everyone on earth, all of us, are interconnected. *(Leader: interlock your fingers so both hands are touching at the base of each finger, then demonstrate that it is difficult to separate them, a symbolic way to show that there is strength in being interconnected.)*

All: Help us to be ubuntu.

Leader: Lord, help us understand that ubuntu is the interconnectedness that means “I am because we are.”

All: Amen.

Distribute the coloring sheets and markers, etc. to students. Explain that the students are to make a poster to take home. They can color the letters of the word UBUNTU any way they wish. Then help them review the words used in the prayer:

caring, trustful, unselfish, respectful,

sharing, helpful, and interconnected.

They can choose all or some of these to add to their poster. Make certain they understand that these words are all part of ubuntu. Ask them how these words mean I Am Because We Are.

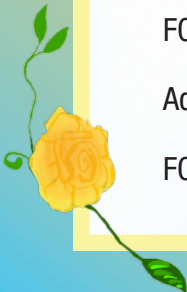
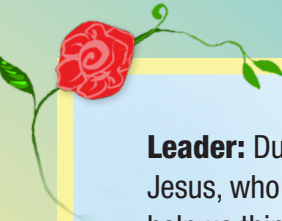
Encourage them to take this poster home and talk with their families about what ubuntu means.

This [video](#) will help children understand ubuntu with its wonderful visuals; the phrases at the end are very helpful also:

FOR GRADES K-5: Character Building Stories—Ubuntu

Additional, very [short video](#) that defines ubuntu very well:

FOR GRADES 2-5: What is Ubuntu?



STEP 2: MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

MISSION STORY:

Maya and Rocco listened as their mother told them the Christmas story. “Right before Jesus was to be born, Mary and Joseph had to leave their home and travel to a town called Bethlehem. They soon realized there was not a room anywhere for them to stay! But an innkeeper wanted to help them. He managed to find a place like a barn where they could rest. It was there that Jesus was born,” Mama said. Then she added, “Remember, there are helpers.”

The next day, Maya and Rocco said goodbye to Mama. Their country had become a very dangerous place and Mama needed to move her family to the United States. She did not have enough money for all three of them to make the trip to the border of the United States. So, she had decided to send her children first. They prayed she could join them later.

Maya and Rocco started walking with other people towards the border of Mexico and the United States. They held hands as they walked through mud so deep it came up to their waists. Large insects flew around them. They had to look out for wild animals. All this very, very hard, and they missed their mother.

But a woman named Rosa shared some food with them. A man named Carlos invited them to walk with his family. There will be the helpers, Mama had said.

After many days, they reached the border into the United States. Both children were tired, dirty, and hungry. They were taken to a detention center. There, helpers made certain they felt safer. They had a place to shower and sleep. A woman named Gloria and others made them good food. Rocco grinned at her as he ate his spaghetti. With the help of a man named Ricardo, they also had toys and art projects.

Painting a picture that she hoped to give to Mama sometime, Maya thought about the Christmas story Mama had told them. The place where Jesus was born was not their home. It was not even a house, but there the Holy Family had been safe for a short time. And now, here she was, not in her home, not even in a house, but she and her brother felt safe.

Together, Maya and Rocco prayed that soon Mama would have enough money to begin her long walk and they could be together again. They also hoped that they could eventually have a home in this new country.

Discussions for grades K-2:

- Name some people who helped Maya and Rocco.
- Do you think Maya and Rocco are feeling the spirit of ubuntu?
- A great man of peace named Nelson Mandela spoke of ubuntu. He told a story of one of many ways he experienced ubuntu when he was a child: In the old days, when we were young, we traveled a lot in our country. We would stop in a village. We did not know any of the people there, but we did not have to ask for food or water. People just came and gave us food.

If you and your family went to a place where you did not know anyone, would you expect people to come to you with food? How is this different from your experience?

- Think about ubuntu. Have you been able to help others? Have others cared for you? Name someone who shows you respect.

For teachers: Years after his death, the voice of Mister Rogers is still one of wisdom and peace. This [short video](#) may be helpful to you as you talk with children about difficult topics, such as children migrating from dangerous situations.

Fred Rogers: Always Look for the Helpers

Discussions for grade 3-5:

- Ubuntu is a philosophy of life, practiced for years. In the recent past, South African President Nelson Mandela helped bring this idea to the whole world. To understand how important this philosophy is, learn more about Mandela:

For forty-six years (1948-1994), the country of South Africa had a system of laws made by a government of only white people. It was known as **Apartheid**, which means “apart.” Even though there were a great deal more people of color than the white citizens, these laws required that non-white South Africans live separately from the whites, in ways that were demeaning. This separation led to children of color having inferior schools and poorer housing than the white children. A person of color and a white person could not legally be friends or get married. There were many more laws that discriminated against them. In short, all non-white South Africans were denied their basic human rights.

Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) was a South African politician and activist. He fought for the rights of all the non-white South Africans. He was arrested for this and spent about thirty years in prison! Thanks to him and others, life and laws began to change. After Mandela was released from prison, he became the president of South Africa! He was known and loved in his country, but also respected and loved by many people the world over for his work for peace, **negotiation, and reconciliation**.

To better understand the philosophy of ubuntu, listen to Mandela himself explain it: [President Nelson Mandela on Ubuntu](#)

- Ubuntu is practiced in many places around the world. Where have you witnessed it?
- Reread the story of Maya and Rocco. Notice the ways in which they experienced ubuntu.
- After learning about Mandela and reading the story about the refugees to the United States, consider repeating together the prayer from Step 1.

Vocabulary:

Apartheid: Apartheid was a cruel and violent system. Apartheid separated people and had punishments for those who disagreed. Apartheid was the same as **segregation**, but the difference is that apartheid became the law.

Segregation: This means keeping people apart. It is often a form of discrimination if one group of people is treated unfairly.

Negotiation: To come to an agreement with another person usually through discussion.

Reconciliation: The act of causing two people or groups of people to become friendly again after there has been a disagreement or other problems.

STEP 3: EXPLORE SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION



Old Testament: Leviticus 19:33-34

The very ancient book of Leviticus contains rules for many different things we do in life such as: how to pick grapes, never say something bad about your parents, and how to cut your hair! One of the most important rules in Leviticus is this: When someone from another country comes to your county, treat them with love and respect.

Life of Jesus: Luke1-: 25-37

Jesus told many stories, called parables, to help us understand God’s loving ways. The parable of the Good Samaritan is about people helping each other. A Samaritan was a person from a country called Samaria. The Samaritans had some Jewish background too, but they were not accepted by the Jewish people. In Jesus’ time, the Jewish people and the Samaritans were enemies. To help each other would have been considered very bad. A priest and a Levite were Jewish people who were considered good and holy.

[Story] A man was traveling when some robbers hurt him badly, took his money and even some of his clothes. A priest came by, saw the hurt man, but walked on without stopping to help. Soon, a Levite man arrived. He saw the hurt man, but he too walked by. Then a Samaritan came along. He felt sadness and worry for the hurt man. He put medicine and bandages on the wounds. The Samaritan lifted the man onto his horse or donkey and brought him to an inn (like a hotel). There he took care of the man. In the morning, the Samaritan man had to leave, but he paid the innkeeper to continue caring for the hurt man. “If you spent more money than what I gave you, I will return here on my way back, and will pay you then.”

Discuss:

- The Samaritan and the hurt man did not know each other.
- Why did Jesus choose to say the helping man was a Samaritan? What was he telling the listeners?
- Think about “ubuntu” and how others may have helped the Samaritan to become such a kind, brave, and helpful person.
- What are examples of how the Samaritan man was practicing ubuntu?
- Because of Jesus’ story, the word “Samaritan” has come to mean more than someone from Samaria. It means someone who is especially caring and helpful to a person who is in distress. There are even organizations with the word, “Samaritan” in their name, and some states have “Good Samaritan” laws.

Christian Living: : Galatians 5:13-14

St. Paul tells us that God gives us freedom, but we should not use it just to have fun. Instead, we are free to take care of each other. For we have been told, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Look at the list below. These are other scriptures that you will find the commandment of loving your neighbor. It is so important, it is mentioned ____ times. (Count them.) Look up three or four of them in a bible and put a check mark by the ones you read.

- ____Leviticus 19:18
- ____Leviticus 19:34

- ____Matthew 19:19
- ____Matthew 22:39
- ____Mark 12:31
- ____Luke 10:27
- ____Romans 13:9
- ____Galatians 5:14
- ____James 2:8

What Does the Church Say? The US bishops wrote: For hundreds of years, our Church has taught that people have a right to migrate—everyone should be allowed to move to another place. We must look at the reasons why people must leave their home countries, and to help the situation or the people.

Most of the people who migrate do so for one or more of these reasons:

- they have been treated so unfairly that their home area is no longer a safe place for them.
- they are very poor and need to find a place where they can get jobs.
- there has been a huge crisis, such as an earthquake, and much of their area has been destroyed.
- others will not accept the way they pray.
- There is a great danger, such as a war.

STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

THE CHRISTMAS CONNECTION

Part of observing Christmas is recognizing the plight of the Holy Family. Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus had much in common with today’s migrants. Help children see these connections by having them play a match game.

The Holy Family:

- Mary and Joseph first left their home not because they wanted to travel, but because of a decree by the government that ruled them.
- Of course, Mary and Joseph had no access to trains or cars, and it is likely they walked.
- Sometimes they may have been in danger.
- Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem in great need because their baby would be born very soon.
- Bethlehem was not prepared to accept them as the inns were full.
- Mary and Joseph could not stay in Bethlehem. They had to continue to travel and settled in a country where they had no family.

Millions of migrants in many parts of the world:

- Migrants today do not necessarily leave their homes willingly.
- Migrants often walk, cross rivers on foot, or must travel very dangerously on the tops of trains, or in over-crowded boats.
- Danger is common for lots of migrants.
- Many migrants are desperate and have babies and young children with them.
- Many hosting countries are already coping with a significant number of refugees and may be countries that have a great deal of poverty.
- Many migrants arrive at a place where they can rest for a while but must move on again. It is likely they end up in a place where they may not have any family.

UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY IN THE WORLD:

For adults and possibly for grades 4 and 5:

Watch this video to learn a great deal about world migration so you can give children a clearer understanding of this experience. Consider the maturity level of your children and decide if it is appropriate to show this video to them.

On this video, minutes 3:16-3:31 show specifically the situation of the children, Maya and Rocco, mentioned in the story in step 2.

What Happens When People are Forced to Flee Their Homes

FOR CHILDREN WHO LOVE NUMBERS:

Some children appreciate learning through statistics. Their grasp of a situation is clearer to them through numbers. Use this link and have them look for information to answer these questions: **Refugee Data Finder**.

- 1) How many people in the world were forced to leave their homes between the years 2000 and 2023? [Answer: 117.3 million]
- 2) How many of the people are children? [Answer: 4.7 million]
- 3) During 2023, how many people were able to go back home eventually or were settled in a new place? [Answer: 1.2 million]

A CHILDREN’S PRAYER FOR MIGRANTS:

Dear God, who created all of us, we pray for our many sisters and brothers who had to leave their homes, as Jesus, Mary, and Joseph did. There are so many, but each one has a name, a birthday, a favorite place, a special holiday, a toy or something else that is precious to them. Most of these can no longer be part of their lives as they must travel. Please watch over them. Please send helpers to them. And please bring them to a place of peace and safely. Amen.

BE A GLOBAL NEIGHBOR

You can support displaced people in Asia with Maryknoll Fr. John Barth, M.M.. He and other organizations are helping displaced people who are running from the violence in their homelands from various countries in Asia and Africa. Fr. Barth and others take care of their physical needs by providing food, clothing, shelter, medical care and education to refugee families. Visit Maryknollsociety.org for more info on how you can make a difference today.

RAISE YOUR VOICE AND ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY

THE AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF UBUNTU

Your children have been learning about a philosophy of life that originated on the African continent many years ago. This video can be used for family viewing. Consider watching it until you come to a point you would like to discuss, then stop the video and talk. Continue later.

Look for insights for these discussion starters in the video:

- How do I operate in the world—how do I see others and how do I treat them?
- Older people’s experiences are important. What topics would you like to talk about with someone who has lived many years? Who should we talk with?
- How does our family practice ubuntu?
- What are other ways we could start for practicing ubuntu?

What We Can Learn from the African Philosophy of Ubuntu

STARTING A FAMILY JOURNAL:

The spirit of ubuntu can be encouraged and nurtured in a family by keeping a journal.

1) Choose a notebook. Add these statements about ubuntu to the front of the notebook:

- How can I be happy if others are sad?
- You can’t be human all by yourself.
- It’s not about you, it’s not about me, it is about us—together as one.
- I am because we are.

Also add this prayer:

Dear God, who created all the life on earth, help us to practice ubuntu each day. Teach us to be caring, trustful, unselfish, and respectful people. Be with us as we celebrate being interconnected with other people and all of your creation. Amen.

2) Select a time each week to take a few minutes and review the past week.

- Reread the statements above so each of you can refresh the concept of ubuntu.
- What happened at school/work/with friends that is an example of ubuntu? Write down these experiences.
- Say the prayer together





NEXT ISSUE COMING LENT 2025