

MIGRATION

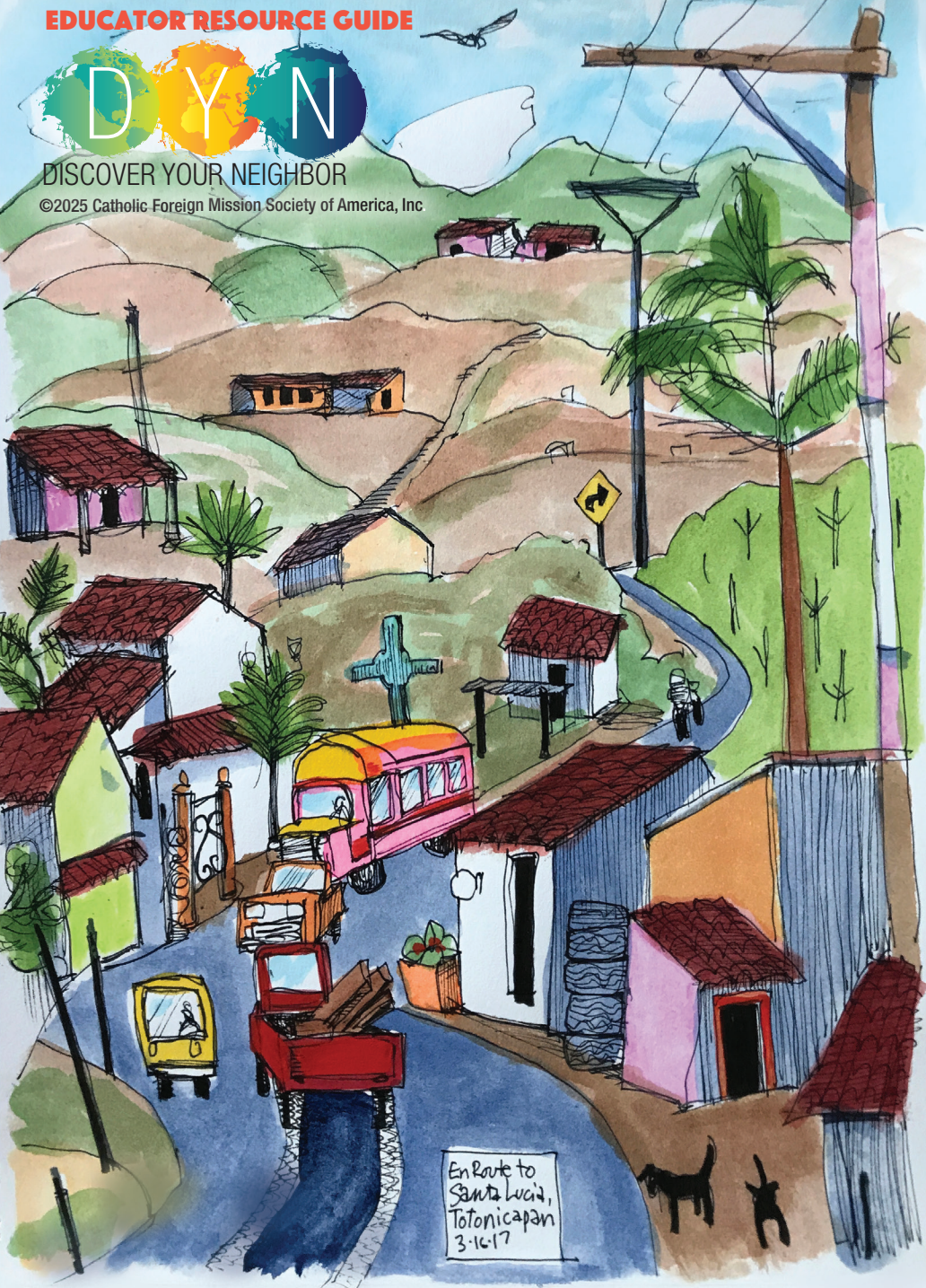
No Room at the Inn? Advent, Migration, and Radical Welcome

EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE

D Y N

DISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBOR

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En Route to
Santa Lucia,
Totonicapan
3-16-17

NO ROOM AT THE INN? ADVENT, MIGRATION, AND RADICAL WELCOME

Welcome to the first print edition of *Discover Your Neighbor (DYN)*! We've brought together in one place our Advent resources for students—DYN for K-5 and middle school, Families in Mission, and more. You'll also find ways to go deeper through our **Mission Formation Ministry Academy**, a welcoming hub for programs and resources that support you on the journey of missionary discipleship.

During Advent, we prepare for the inbreaking of God's love by remembering how the Word became flesh in the story of the Holy Family. Mary and Joseph searched for shelter, knocking, being refused, and moving on—until finally, a door opened.

Las Posadas, a nine-night Advent tradition in Latin America, reenacts this search, calling communities to embody radical hospitality for migrants and the excluded. Similar to the Filipino Panunuluyan, it is more than cultural pageantry; it is a liturgical act of memory and protest. It names the world's rejection of the vulnerable, then dares us to imagine what happens when the Gospel opens a door.

Advent reminds us that God still seeks shelter in us, through us, and among us. Radical hospitality means more than offering a spare room—it de-centers our comfort and welcomes God's disruptive presence in the stranger, the migrant, the unhoused, the forgotten. Journey with us this Advent as we open space for God's presence to be reborn in a world still hungry for love.

Matt Dulka

Associate Director, Mission Formation Ministry



DISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBOR

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MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP FORMATION

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“Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others.”

— Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*

Maryknoll Mission Formation Ministry is a community of missionary disciples who accompany, educate, and inspire people to live God's mission of love. Rooted in the global charism of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, we foster a culture of mission in the U.S.—one that starts in the heart and extends outward in solidarity with the world.

Go deeper with one of our formation programs, retreats, and free resources—offered in English and Spanish, online and in person—we invite you to deepen your faith and respond to urgent issues like climate change, migration, and justice. We are also available to bring our programs to you.

Join a Maryknoll immersion trip and encounter the beauty and struggles of communities worldwide. Grounded in relationship and solidarity, these journeys open hearts to God's presence on the margins. Open trips are available across Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, with tailored experiences for schools, parishes, and organizations.

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Discover Your Neighbor
MIDDLE SCHOOL
A Journey of Hope



OBJECTIVE: Students will **CREATE** and then **PERFORM** modern day stories of migration based on the flight of Joseph, Mary and Jesus to Egypt. They will **ANALYZE** one migrant story and **APPLY** it in their own lives. They will **DISCERN** how scripture and Catholic teaching calls us to treat migrants.

STEP ONE: PRAY

Prayer for Migrant Families:

Good and gracious God, We give thanks for the gift of families and the love they bring to our lives. We ask for protection for families who face hardships, especially those moving in search of a better life. Keep travelers safe and bring them to places of peace. Comfort those who are separated from loved ones or living in fear because of violence or injustice. As we remember the struggles faced by the Holy Family, help us not forget the struggles of migrant families today. Open our hearts to show kindness and welcome to those seeking safety. Give us the courage to treat every stranger with care and dignity. (Adapted from USCCB, Justice for Immigrants)

STEP 2: MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

By Deacon Leonel Yoque

I was born in Guatemala, known as “the land of eternal spring,” with jungles, volcanoes, rivers, and incredible diversity of plants, animals, and cultures. Guatemala is home to 22 languages, including Mayan, Garifuna, and Xinca. I grew up with my parents and two sisters, loved soccer,



and dreamed of playing professionally. I also studied at San Carlos State University in the capital.

As a teenager, I thought I’d live in Guatemala forever. But in the late 1980s, conflict between the military and groups opposing injustice brought violence, especially in Indigenous communities. Many innocent people were caught in the middle. Human rights abuses, curfews, and canceled classes made life unsafe. My dreams of becoming a lawyer and soccer player faded, and like many others, I felt forced to leave.

In 1989, after trying unsuccessfully to get a visa, I traveled by land through Mexico and crossed into the U.S. near Tijuana. The 20-day journey was difficult, but I made it. Life in the U.S. was another struggle—I didn’t speak English and worked exhausting jobs just to survive and send money home. A landscaping employer encouraged me to attend English school, which opened new opportunities.

At first, I thought I’d return home soon. But violence continued, and I applied for political asylum. For 18 years I couldn’t leave the U.S. or see my family. During that time, I missed birthdays, weddings, and funerals. When I finally received a green card, I returned to Guatemala in 2008. Landing there was overwhelming—joy to see my family again, sadness for all the years lost.

My journey has been full of sacrifice and hope. What began as temporary exile became a life-changing path. I was ordained permanent deacon for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, eventually earned a master’s degree and began working with Maryknoll, leading immersion trips back to Guatemala so others can experience its beauty and challenges. Each trip helps me heal the scars of leaving home as a teenager.

Writing my story reminded me that migrants



are not just numbers—we are people with dreams, families, and hopes. I am grateful for the opportunities I’ve had and the chance to reconnect with my homeland. But I know many others still live in uncertainty, without the same chance to rebuild their lives.

Read the full story at <https://maryknoll.link/pc>



REFLECT on these questions in a journal or in a small group:

1. Why did Deacon Leonel have to leave his country, and what hopes kept him going?
2. What does it mean that “migrants are not just numbers,” and why is that important?
3. If you had to move to a new country where you didn’t know the language, how would you want people to welcome you?



STEP 3: EXPLORE SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

READ the following scriptures. **REFLECT** on the questions.

Old Testament: Leviticus 19:33-34:

Life of Jesus: Matthew 2:13-15:

Christian Living: Hebrews 13:1-3:

1. Why did Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt with the baby Jesus? How do you imagine that they were treated when they got to Egypt?
2. What do these passages suggest to us or tell us about how migrants should be treated?
3. How is God asking you to respond to the migrants in your community and surrounding areas?



POPE LEO XIV ON THE WORLD DAY FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:



“This link between migration and hope is clearly evident in many contemporary experiences of migration. Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope. Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible.

In a world darkened by war and injustice, even when all seems lost, migrants and refugees stand as messengers of hope. Their courage and tenacity bear heroic testimony to a faith that sees beyond what our eyes can see and gives them the strength to defy death on the various contemporary migration routes.

At the same time, the communities that welcome (migrants) can also be a living witness to hope, one that is understood as the promise of a present and a future where the dignity of all as children of God is recognized. In this way, migrants and refugees are recognized as brothers and sisters, part of a family in which they can express their talents and participate fully in community life.” <https://maryknoll.link/WMD>

1. Why do you think Pope Leo calls migrants and refugees “messengers of hope?”
2. What have you seen in your community and in the country about how migrants are currently being treated? In what ways is their treatment following or not following church teaching? How do you think that your community could be more welcoming to immigrants?
3. Migrants often bring unique skills, talents, and traditions to their new communities. What is a talent or tradition from your family that you would want to share if you moved to a new place?

STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

As you read in the Gospel, Joseph and Mary fled with the baby Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt in order to save Jesus' life, a journey that probably took them weeks. **WRITE** a modern day story or play based on their lives. **IMAGINE** what it would be like for a family with a baby to have to flee in the middle of the night from their home. What would they have been able to take with them? Where did they sleep and eat along the way? Were they treated well or poorly in the communities that they had to travel through? What gave them hope as they traveled? How were they received when they finally arrived in their new country, a place where they knew no one and did not speak the language?

Use your imagination to answer these questions as a part of your story or play. Once it is written, ask for classmates to play or read the different parts and either **PERFORM** your play for the class or record it as a video to be played for them. **REFLECT** on what you learned from this experience.

RAISE YOUR VOICE

Currently over 1 million people who are in the U.S. legally are at risk of losing their legal status and being deported to places like Haiti and Honduras where there is widespread violence. Write to your U.S. Senators and Representatives asking that they be protected. At Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, you'll find a link to help you write a sample letter. Just fill out the take action form and it will write a sample letter for you.



<https://maryknoll.link/MOGC>

BE A GLOBAL NEIGHBOR

Consider helping the children of migrants in Bangkok, Thailand where Wat Prok School, established by Maryknoll two decades ago, has provided education, skill training as well as clothing,

food and medical assistance to many Mon boys, ranging from six to seventeen years old, living at a small Mon Buddhist monastery in Bangkok. Visit the [Maryknoll Society](https://maryknoll.link/Proj) webpage for more information. <https://maryknoll.link/Proj>



ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY

DISCUSS with your family - who are the migrant families in your area? **REACH OUT** to your diocesan Catholic Charities Office to find out ways that you might support them. If you know of a local migrant family or individual, consider **INVITING** them to your home for dinner.

NEXT ISSUE IS COMING IN JANUARY FOR LENT 2026
www.discoveryourneighbor.org for
the full edition and more resources.



Discover Your Neighbor
K-5 EDITION
A Journey of Hope

OBJECTIVE: Students will learn the meaning of the words immigrant and migrant, come to have an **understanding** of the circumstances of the many people who are forced to leave their

homes, and to consider the experience of adjusting to a new home country. They will **make connections** between what scripture teaches about welcoming the stranger and how they might do that themselves. Families are **encouraged** to reach out to newly arrived migrants.

STEP ONE: PRAY

Prayer for Migrant Families:

Leader: God our Creator, this time called Advent is when we think about Jesus being born into our human family, and when we celebrate with our families. Please watch over our families.



Photo by: Sean Sprague

Jesus, when you were a baby, Mary and Joseph quickly left home with you.

They had to flee to another country to keep you safe! Please watch over all the families now who must leave their homes and flee to a safer place.

All: Give them hope and help, Jesus!

Leader: There are helpers for these endangered families. Watch over the helpers too, so they may do a good job.

All: Give them hope and help, Jesus!

Leader: And as we celebrate Christmas with our families, please show us how we can welcome and be friends with people who must call a new place home.

All: Give us hope and help, Jesus!

Leader: For all families we pray for safety and love.

All: Amen.

STEP 2: MAKE PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

By Deacon Leonel Yoque

I was born in an amazing country! There are volcanoes, jungles, and rivers! There are a huge number of species of plants and animals. Just a few are jaguars, scarlet macaws, kinkajous, quetzals, and

For a version of this story
designed for Grades K-2, visit
<https://maryknoll.link/K2>



Religious Education Congress,
Yoque/Los Angeles

howler monkeys! And these animals and plants live in fourteen different eco-regions, such as the mangrove forests and cloud forest. There are so many groups of people, we have 22 languages!

I was blessed with two sisters and good parents. When I was about 18, I played soccer in a semi-professional league and I was going to university. I had plans! I loved Guatemala. I never expected to leave it. But today I am an immigrant, living in the United States.

Why did I leave my family, my school, my beautiful country?

Because life there changed. Serious fighting began between groups of people, injuring many. The government imposed a curfew: no one on the streets after 6 p.m. Those breaking the curfew could be forced into the army. Schools were closed. Meetings could not be held. Soldiers walked the streets.

My life changed quickly. No school, no soccer. Instead, there was danger. I was now a young man with no future. I talked with my family and friends, coming to a hard decision: I had to leave my country and every person and place I loved. The only hope I had now was to go to the United States, perhaps for a few years.

I started the legal process to go to the United States. That didn't work and I would soon be in danger if I did not leave! I couldn't fly or drive into the United States because I did not have the legal papers saying I could enter the United States. So, I began traveling north, all the way through Mexico, walking much of it.

Twenty days later, I got to the border between Mexico and the United States. For safety, I had to cross in the dark of night. I was very tired and now faced a hill to climb, without light to guide me. It was a hard time. Eventually, I got to a place where I could stay but life continued to be hard:

- I didn't speak English.
- Life in the United States was very different from Guatemala.
- I took any job I could find, though I did not have a card from the US government saying I could work.
- I worried about my family in Guatemala, where the difficulties continued.
- I didn't know when I might be able to go home.

Over time, I did receive permission to work and to drive, but I was not allowed to leave the United States. I was safer, of course, but it also meant I did not know when I could go home. That did not change for 18 years! During those years, my grandparents and others I loved died. I missed many birthdays and weddings of my family and friends.

But I had to keep going and make a good life for myself. I had to hope again. I was able to see that God had guided me from Guatemala to the United States. I began working with Maryknoll, helping others learn about God in many ways. And now, part of that work brings me back to Guatemala often.

All over the world, thousands of people must migrate as I had to. My life is good now, but many migrants still live with great difficulty. Sometimes the news talks about how many migrants there are. We are not numbers! We are people with challenges, with sadness, but also with hope for a better life.

God is with them as God is with me and you. And God is asking us all to live as sisters and brothers.

VOCABULARY: Migrant, Immigrant, Refugee:

There is no one internationally accepted legal definition of a migrant, so often the words “migrant” and “immigrant” are seen as having the same meaning. Migrants are generally described as people who have moved from one place to another, often to find work or better living conditions. If they stay in their new country and become citizens, they are immigrants. Sometimes, people do not choose to move, but are forced to move, to flee from home because of war or violence. The word for that is **refugee**.

DISCUSS: Do you know anyone who has migrated from their home? Ask others (grandparents, other relatives, or family friends) if they know people who moved to a new place because their home was no longer a good place to live.

Do you think your church, school, or neighborhood are welcoming places?

Often people who have migrated have interesting talents or traditions. If you moved to a new country, what are things about your family that you would like to share?

STEP 3: EXPLORE SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

Read these Scripture passages in the Bible and discuss the questions below.

Old Testament: Leviticus 19:33-34

Life of Jesus: Matthew 2:1

DISCUSS:

- Why did Mary and Joseph have to flee to Egypt when Jesus was a baby?
- Discuss what this trip was like: consider that they may have been frightened; they had to leave other people they loved; they had no cars or other transportation, and no phones. What might they have been thinking about as they traveled from Bethlehem to Egypt?



2013 Guatemala Immersion Trip

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH SAY?

This is based on Pope Leo’s words on the World Day for Migrants and Refugees:

When you go on a vacation, do you hope the trip will be lots of fun? If you are a child who is a migrant, you might be hoping that when you travel, you won’t have to walk for days. You might hope you will have a place to sleep and enough food to eat.

That doesn’t seem very hopeful! But Pope Leo says he sees hope often in families who must migrate. They are leaving places that are no longer safe, or homes where there is not enough food. So, they hope that a new place will be much better. They must be strong, brave, and hopeful to leave. Then they must continue to be strong, brave, and hopeful as they travel, even if the trip is very hard. They have hope that they will have a better life in the future.

Pope Leo also sees hope in the people who welcome migrants to their new home. These “welcomers” are hoping that the newcomers will be able to make good lives and will be treated with care and dignity.

Go here for a worksheet with more activities and to read the the full address from Pope Leo:

<https://maryknoll.link/WS>

Or scan the QR-Code



STEP 4: TAKE ACTION

At Christmas, we hear the story of Jesus' family having to flee their country, becoming refugees. Parts of their story is like that of Deacon Leonel and millions of other people. Reread **Deacon Leonel's Journey of Hope** and then compare how the situation of a refugee of today has difficulties similar to those of Joseph, Mary, and the baby Jesus.

DISCUSS Deacon Leonel's family began to feel unsafe in their home country, but there was not a king trying to find them. What was happening there to make them feel unsafe? *For more discussion questions go to the link: <https://maryknoll.link/s4>*

BE A GLOBAL NEIGHBOR

Consider helping the children of migrants in Bangkok, Thailand where Wat Prok School, established by Maryknoll two decades ago, has provided education, skill training as well as clothing, food and medical assistance to many Mon boys, ranging from six to seventeen years old, living at a small Mon Buddhist monastery in Bangkok. Visit the **Maryknoll Society** webpage for more information. <https://maryknoll.link/Proj>

RAISE YOUR VOICE/ENGAGE YOUR FAMILY

Learn: Currently over 1 million people who are in the United States legally are at risk of losing their legal status and being deported to places like Haiti and Honduras where there is widespread violence. Our Church teaches that we must treat refugees and migrants as our brothers and sisters. Help your children understand this and show them they can participate in this serious issue. Explain:

- There are many people who have come to the United States because it is not safe in their home countries.
- They have legal status (this means the government has told them that it is ok that they are in the United States.)
- Right now there are people in our government trying to say those people must now go back to unsafe countries.
- Our Church clearly teaches we must welcome refugees and migrants. For just one example, see Leviticus 19:33-34.

ACT:

1. As a family, you can write to your U.S. representatives asking that the refugees be protected. To make this more understandable and meaningful for your children, help them write their own letter or do a drawing to show their concern. Visit the Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns website at <https://maryknoll.link/MOGC> to help you write a sample letter. Just fill out the take action form and it will write a sample letter for you. Include your child's pictures and their letter with yours.
2. Reach out to your diocesan Catholic Charities Office to find out ways that you might support their work with migrants. If you know of a local family or individual newly arrived, consider inviting them to your home.



MFM / Africa

PRAY:

Sometimes, God wants us to pray for others that we may not know. As a family, pray for a family forced to migrate. You do not need to know their names, where they are from, or where they are. Just know that they need your prayers. If you have the tradition of lighting an Advent wreath, pray for the family when you light your candles, or pray at meals or at bedtime.



2013 Guatemala Immersion Trip

- Pray their journey is a safe one.
- Pray they have found others to help them get food, home, and schools.
- Pray they can start to feel safe.

Written By Anne Neuberger

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www.discoveryourneighbor.org for the full edition and more resources.



Be Prepared by Welcoming Others

First Sunday of Advent

November 30, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

What does it mean to be prepared? As we enter this Advent Season, we often think that being prepared for Christmas means shopping and buying presents, but actually how Jesus invites us to prepare is quite different. Jesus wants us to prepare by following his teachings and example every day. He says in this Gospel that we don't know the hour when God will come, but if we live everyday like Jesus wants us to, we don't need to be afraid or worried about that. One way we live this out is by opening our hearts to others. When we prepare to welcome newcomers to our communities, especially migrants and refugees, it's a way to welcome the Holy Family into our lives.

SACRED SPACE ACTIVITY:

Place your creche or manger scene in your sacred space, but leave it empty for now as a sign that you are beginning your preparations to welcome the birth of Jesus. Each week of Advent we will invite you to add new figures to your manger scene. If you can't afford a creche or don't have one, try making your own out of cardboard and decorating it. Draw the figures who will become part of it.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, as we prepare to celebrate your birth this Christmas Day, may we remember that you were born as a migrant with your mother giving birth to you in a stable among the animals because there was no place else for you. As we remember the challenging situation of your birth, may we reach out especially to the migrant, refugee, and homeless families in our area who also face difficult circumstances. Amen



2018 Guatemala Immersion

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Read today's Gospel:

Matthew 24:37-44



A toy abandoned in the U.S.-Mexico border at El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua (Tammi Murray/Mexico)

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

REFLECT TOGETHER:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- When was a time when you were caught unprepared for something? What was that like?
- If God were to show up at your home today, would you be ready? Would he be happy with what he saw?
- How can you prepare to welcome Jesus more deeply into your lives during Advent?
- Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were migrants more than once in their lives. How are migrants or refugees treated in your area?
- In Matthew 24:37-44, Jesus says we do not know the day or the hour when he will come. What do you think he means by that?

TAKE ACTION AS A FAMILY:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- When it was time for Jesus to be born, Joseph and Mary traveled to a town, Bethlehem, that was not prepared to receive them. Each week of Advent we will look at ways that you can welcome refugees, migrants, and foreigners into your community. Pope Leo reminds us that migrants and refugees “should be recognized and appreciated as a true divine blessing, an opportunity to open oneself to the grace of God, who gives new energy and hope to his Church.” (Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees). This week contact the Catholic Charities Office (or a similar one) in your Diocese to find out how you might help migrant and refugee families in your area. Discuss the possibilities and decide what you would like to do.
- Read the story of Noah as a family (Gen: 6-9) and draw or build a simple ark together. Talk about how Noah prepared when others didn’t, and how your family can prepare your hearts for Jesus this Advent.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God,

You invite us during Advent to open our hearts and our lives more deeply to you. As people hurry to and fro shopping these days, remind us to slow down to connect with you in prayer. Remind us to see your face especially in the faces of the families who are migrants and refugees. Let us welcome them as if we were welcoming your Holy Family into our town. Amen



2013 Guatemala Immersion Trip

Families in Mission

A Voice Crying Out In The Wilderness

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

That’s not fair! How many times have you heard someone cry out like that? That’s what we hear today from John the Baptist as he cries out in the desert against unfairness, injustice, and sin. He’s all by himself doing this, but it doesn’t matter because he knows that he needs to stand up for what is right. It may seem unusual, but part of preparing for the birth of Jesus means pointing out what is wrong and unfair in the places where we live. That’s how we can begin to create the communities of kindness, love, and justice that Jesus desires.

SACRED SPACE ACTIVITY:

Read Isaiah 11:6-10 (from today’s first reading) and then decide which animal figures you will put in your creche or manger scene. You can use the animal figures that you already have or draw other ones and put them in.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

As we prepare for your birth dear Jesus, open our hearts so that we can be people of justice like your cousin John the Baptist, speaking out about what is wrong, unfair, and sinful. Give us the courage to create a better world where all people feel welcome, especially those who are fleeing violence, hunger, or environmental disasters in their own countries. Amen



2024 Kenya Immersion Trip

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Read today’s Gospel:

Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: A voice of one crying

out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time, Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not

presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."



2024 Jamaica Immersion Trip

REFLECT TOGETHER:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- When was a time when something unfair happened to you? How did you react? What do you wish happened?
- When was a time you spoke out about something that was unfair or wished that you did?
- If John the Baptist were alive today, who do you think he would say was being treated unfairly in the places where you live, go to school, and work?
- John the Baptist stood up for what was right even when he was alone. Have you ever seen someone do that? How did it make you feel?

TAKE ACTION AS A FAMILY:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

Who in your school, neighborhood, workplace or parish comes from another country? Find a time when you can talk to this person (or family) and ask them about how and why they came to the U.S. Ask them what it was like for them when they first came. Were they treated fairly or unfairly? Afterwards, as a family, discuss what you learned from your conversation with them.

As a family, walk around your home, school, or neighborhood and look for examples of things that seem unfair (trash left behind, someone left out, rules not followed). Talk about small ways you can help make things better.

St. Oscar Romero was someone who spoke out boldly against the injustices in his country of El Salvador when the leaders of his country wanted him to stay quiet. Watch this 4 minute animated video about his life and discuss afterwards what you learned.

<https://maryknoll.link/OR>



CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God,

As Joseph sought an inn or home for Mary to give birth to Jesus, he was repeatedly turned away with responses of "There is no room, no room." In these days of Advent let us especially reach out to migrants and refugees who also are often greeted with responses of "No room or we don't want you." May we welcome in your name those who have no place else to go. Amen



A Venezuelan migrant family climbing a steep hill in the Darién Gap. (Cerneka/Panama & Columbia)

Families in Mission
Look At What He Does
Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

If we took away all of our Christmas decorations and the shopping that we are doing, how might others know that we are Christians preparing for the birth of Jesus? What might others see or notice about us that was any different than other people? When John the Baptist wondered if Jesus was the savior, Jesus sent him a message saying look at what I do - people are being healed and cleansed and good news is being brought to the poor. That's the challenge for us, that others could tell that we are Christians by what we do for the poor and the sick.

SACRED SPACE ACTIVITY:

This week add to your creche the shepherds, poor men who were among the first to hear about the birth of Jesus.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

You gave proof to others that you were God by telling them to look at what you did. When you made the blind see and the deaf hear,



Maria Lopez (green and gray shirt) participates in Neighbors Link Family Center that helps parents prepare their children for success in school and beyond.

your actions showed that you were truly divine. During these days of Advent, may our actions show that we are your followers by the good that we do for the poor, the migrants, and the sick. Amen

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Read today's Gospel:

Matthew 11:2-11

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you. Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."



Afghan children find temporary shelter at a camp for internally displaced persons in their war-ravaged homeland.

REFLECT TOGETHER:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- This advent season how might you be like Jesus bringing healing to others and good news to the poor?
- If someone from the outside were to observe your family, what actions would they see that showed that you are Catholic Christians?
- Jesus points to His works—healing, giving sight, raising the dead—as signs of who he is. How does Jesus reveal himself to you today especially in the lives of migrants and refugees?
- **John’s mission was to prepare the way for Jesus.** How can we prepare the way for Jesus by showing hospitality to migrants, refugees, or strangers in our community?

TAKE ACTION AS A FAMILY:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- In the school cafeteria, invite someone who is originally from another country to have lunch with you. See what you can learn from each other.
- Invite a migrant or refugee family to have dinner with you at your home. Ask them what they miss about their old country and what traditions from it that they still celebrate.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God,

May we bring Advent alive in our schools, neighborhoods, cities, and country by living like your son Jesus showed us. May what we do bring healing and hope especially to those who are sick, lonely, or excluded.

Amen



Maryknoll Lay Missioner Teresa Villaruz celebrates with her students at St. Francis Primary School in Mombasa, Kenya
Photo credit, Judy Walter

Families in Mission

The Unexpected

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

INTRODUCTION:

What do we do when something unexpected happens? Mary did not expect to become the mother of Jesus. Joseph did not expect that his bride would become miraculously pregnant. Mary could have said no when the angel appeared to her about becoming the mother of Jesus. Joseph could have run away when he found out that Mary was pregnant. However, they both said “yes” to what God was asking of them, even if they didn’t fully understand it. What do we do when God unexpectedly asks us to do something very hard? Do we say “no” or do we say “yes” that we will do the best that we can? Christmas is only days away and maybe it won’t turn out the way that we expect, but good things can still happen if we say “yes” to God.

SACRED SPACE ACTIVITY:

Put the figures of Joseph and Mary in your creche or manger scene, but not the baby Jesus (You can put him in on Christmas morning). You can also add the Wise Men or Three Kings.



MFM El Paso-Juarez Immersion Trip 2019

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus,

Life is full of unexpected moments, some of which can be very hard and scary. May we be like your mother, Mary and your foster father, Joseph, and trust that we can get through those hard times when we say “yes” to you and what you want for us. Amen

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Read today's Gospel:

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, since he was a righteous man yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall



A father and son in Nopara, a village near Srinagar, Bangladesh. (Paul Jeffrey)

conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

REFLECT TOGETHER:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- When was a time when something hard happened to you unexpectedly? How did you respond?
- What helps you get through hard times?
- Mary and Joseph said “yes” even though it wasn’t easy. Why do

you think they did so?

- The angel told Joseph not to be afraid. What are some things that make you nervous about doing the right thing?
- Mary and Joseph had to travel far away from home under difficult circumstances. What are some of the things they might have been worried about? How is that similar to what immigrants may feel when they move to a new country?

TAKE ACTION AS A FAMILY:

Discuss some or all of these questions as a family:

- Invite someone to your Christmas who has been left out - an immigrant neighbor, a newcomer at church, someone who lives alone and has no relatives.
- Sometime during the Christmas Season (which lasts until Jan. 11th) join with others from your parish to offer a welcoming dinner for refugees and migrants from your area. Ask them to share some of the holiday traditions that they had in their own countries.
- Do a kind unexpected act for someone this week.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God,

In a few days we will celebrate the birth of your son Jesus. At this time we remember that some in the world have way more than they need while others do not have enough to survive. May we demonstrate the love that we have for Jesus by doing what we can to take care of those who do not have enough. May we give up some of our extra things so that others can simply have enough. Amen



Maryknoll Mission Archives

SUNDAY REFLECTION GUIDES

CONNECT THE SUNDAY READING TO YOUR LIFE

We see from Jesus and the early Christian communities that missionary discipleship was never meant to be a solo journey. Inspired by the African philosophy of Ubuntu—"I am because we are"—we are transformed by the power of community, interconnectedness, and mutual support. Over the centuries, the Sunday Gospel readings have provided a roadmap for the missionary disciple journey.

Sign up to receive them weekly  <https://maryknoll.link/chw>



The Sunday Reflection Guides offer a simple, engaging way to reflect on and pray with the Gospel each week. Perfect for personal prayer, classrooms, families, or faith-sharing groups, these guides draw on Pope Francis' *Joy of the Gospel* and the synodal spirit of walking together.

CHEWING ON THE WORD

Want to go deeper in community? Join us for Chewing on the Word every Wednesday at 12 PM ET / 9 AM PT on Zoom. In just 30 minutes, we reflect on the upcoming Sunday Gospel and share how it speaks to our daily lives as missionary disciples. Come whenever you can—no need to commit every week.

Additional Advent Resources ADVENT POSTERS

Jesus comes to us in the unexpected form of a little baby, but somehow babies and little children transform us by their innocence and purity. Use these Advent posters with images of children from around the world as a visual meditation for yourself and your students asking "How do they speak to you? What message do they convey?"

Mary, our mother, speaks to us in many ways. The way that Mary is pictured here is as part of an icon, which are special paintings that invite us to see things that are holy or divine. With these iconographic images of Mary, what do you think the artist is trying to say? If you were to make an icon of Mary, what would yours look like? What would you want it to say?

These Maryknoll Advent (<https://maryknoll.link/av>) and Mary Posters (<https://maryknoll.link/Mary>) are available for download or as Slide Show.

Bringing Welcome to Life: HOST YOUR OWN POSADAS

STORYTELLING is one way cultures keep memory alive. For many Latine/Hispanic communities, Las Posadas carry this memory forward across generations, creating spaces of faith, reflection, and community. Las Posadas reenact Mary and Joseph's search for shelter, gathering people to walk together, sing, knock on doors, break piñatas, and share meals- bringing prayer and practice together.

As Posadas spread and adapt in the U.S., more and more communities are seeing the connection between migration and hospitality. While details of how to organize a posada may vary from region to region, the heart of creating a posada remains the same: people collaborate with their talents and lived cultural identity to proclaim with joy and conviction that there is room, there is welcome, and God is among us.

Host a Posadas in your community! It doesn't take much—just open doors, share food, sing together, and create space for welcome. In doing so, you carry forward a tradition of joy, hospitality, and faith made real in community. Use this link <https://maryknoll.link/Pos> for an easy to use Posadas Guide.



El Salvador, Posada 1999
Photo by: Sean Sprague



2023 MFM Assembly at Candle Lighting Prayer for Advent Wreath (See prayer on facing page).

ADVENT WREATH PRAYER

Create a sacred place for an Advent Wreath, and each week light a candle remembering how God seeks to find a home in our hearts this Christmas.

First Sunday

LIGHT the first purple” and **READ** *Isaiah 9:1,5*.

READ: We light this first candle remembering Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay. We pray for all refugees fleeing their homes and searching for a safe place.

PRAY: God, light the way for all those in need of safety. Amen.

Second Sunday

LIGHT the second purple candle and **READ** *Luke 11:9-10*.

READ: We light this second candle and recall the encounter the Holy Family had with the innkeeper. We pray that all migrants and refugees receive the help they need and that those they encounter open their doors with compassionate hearts.

PRAY: God, light the way for all of us to open our doors and hearts with compassion to all those who need help. Amen.

Third Sunday

LIGHT the pink candle and **READ** *Hebrews 13:1-6*.

READ: We light this third candle and remember the Three Kings who traveled to welcome your son. We pray for all those who welcome refugees around the world. We give thanks for their hospitality and care and pray that we too might be welcoming.

PRAY: God, let the light of those who care for refugees be an example for all people. Amen.

Fourth Sunday

LIGHT the fourth purple candle and **READ** *Matthew 2:13-23*.

READ: We light this fourth candle and remember that the Holy Family had to flee as refugees to save Jesus' life. We pray for a peaceful end to conflicts, violence, injustice, climate change and natural disasters that force people to leave their homes.

PRAY: God, shine the light of peace upon the earth. Amen.

Why do we do

WHAT WE DO?

This is one of the questions the youth ask me about a missionary vocation. To respond to this thought-provoking question, I use the famous phrase that Maryknoll Bishop James E. Walsh, said, “Mission is to go where you are needed but not wanted, and stay until you are wanted but not needed.”

We Maryknoll missionaries do what we do because Jesus Christ did it with much love. Jesus is who calls us, he invites us to mission. And let me tell you, doing mission with Maryknoll changed my life completely. Maryknoll can be your opportunity to know our world not only through adventure, service and engaging cultures but also through deep prayer, commitment to the poor, knowledge of the gospel and much more. Find out more about us and join us! (<https://maryknollsociety.org/vocations/>)

