



Elementary Prayer Pilgrimage on the Refugee Crisis

Objective

To help children understand why people around the world have become refugees and to encourage action in solidarity with refugees.

Time:

60 minutes, including a 20-minute introduction in the classroom followed by a 40-minute pilgrimage

Preparation for Pilgrimage

Before the day of the pilgrimage:

- Ask the children to bring in a photo or drawing of their family.
- Choose a space for the pilgrimage. The group should begin by gathering in a classroom or hall. They will then move to six different spaces around a room, the school or an outdoor space. They should finish in a “final destination” space, like a hall or outdoor space, weather permitting.

On the day of the pilgrimage:

Set up these six focus areas, in advance, along the route of the pilgrimage, using the following materials:

1. A world map and list of countries
2. A loaf of bread (or photo included)
3. A passport (or photo included)
4. A backpack (or photo included)
5. Photo of Khawle’s family portrait (included)
6. Photo of the Lampedusa Cross, copies of the “Journey Feet” action sheet for each child, and tools for the children to write and draw their message.

During and after the pilgrimage:

Take photos of the pilgrimage and email them to education@crs.org with your school name so they can be posted on social media.

Three Themes:

Welcoming the Stranger

Today we will be thinking about people who have become refugees, their hopes and dreams, and how we can show that we care about them. Catholic Relief Services has a word for this: solidarity. We sometimes say that we “walk alongside” people. That doesn’t mean we actually walk with them, but we do things that show we care about and want to help them.

Pope Francis has asked all of us to experience God’s mercy by welcoming the outcast. Finding ways to support refugees in building better lives is one way that we can welcome the outsider.

Who are Refugees?

Refugees are people who have to move so they can be safe and live in freedom. Why might refugees flee or leave their own country?

[Give the children a chance to think and discuss in pairs and then take some ideas from the whole class.]

Refugees leave their countries because of war, poverty or being persecuted.

[explain this is like being bullied or picked on].

Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a prayerful journey that people make to a special place—sometimes to a church. In our pilgrimage today, we will be “walking alongside” all the refugees who are forced to make very dangerous journeys to find safety and a better life.

Let’s start by making the sign of the cross.

[As you set off on your journey, you could choose a hymn for children to sing as they move from one space to the next; otherwise, encourage everyone to be prayerful as they move.]

Space One: The World Map

[Gather silently around the world map.]

60 million people in our world have been forced from their homes by war and persecution. We will go home after school today, but they may never see their homes again. Let's stop to think about where today's refugees are coming from. These are the top 10 countries ranked by number of people forced out by fighting:

[Read (or get children to read) each country's name and find each one on the map]

Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea, Iraq

After each prayer, our response will be 'Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.'"

We pray for all the places in the world where there is war, where people have to leave their homes because of violence.

[Raise your hand to invite children to join in the response. Do this at each station to encourage participation.]

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

[Pause for a few moments of silent prayer before moving on to the next point.]

Space Two: A Loaf of Bread

[Move to the place where the loaf of bread is and gather silently around it.]

One in six people will go to bed hungry tonight. Drought, or a lack of rain, has made it hard for farmers to grow enough food to feed their families. Because of this, they sometimes need to move to other places to earn money.

We pray for those who are hungry and those who have had to leave their homes. We also ask for all people to care for the Earth, our common home.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

[Pause for a few moments of silent prayer before moving on to the next point.]

Space Three: A Passport

[Move to the place where the passport is and gather silently around it.]

Too often, people are persecuted by others who see them as different. This is a major cause of people leaving their homes and countries. Away from their homes, refugees often feel lost and frightened. Yet in God's eyes we are all part of one human family.

We pray for places where people are attacked for being "different." We pray that people will live in harmony with each other, realizing that we are all God's children.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

[Pause for a few moments of silent prayer before moving on to the next point.]

Space Four: A Backpack

[Move to the place where the backpack is and gather silently around it.]

Look down at what you are wearing. If you have a backpack at school, think about what's in it. Refugees have had to pick up and move with even fewer possessions than these, not sure if they will ever be able to return home.

We pray for refugees on long journeys. We pray for safe passage, hearts filled with courage, strength to support children and the weak, and at the journey's end, a true welcome.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

[Pause for a few moments of silent prayer before moving on to the next point.]

Space Five: Khawle's Family Portrait

[Move to the place where the portrait is and gather silently around it.]

Forced migration means families and communities are often apart from each other. They miss one another very much. They are often sad because they will not see each other for a long time.

[Point out to the children the picture of a family with an empty chair. This picture is of a refugee family. The chair symbolizes someone who is not able to be with the family whom they miss very much. If the children have a family photo or drawing, invite them to place them around Khawle's portrait.]

We pray for families and friends separated by conflict and migration, that they may soon be reunited.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

[Pause for a few moments of silent prayer before moving on to the next point]

Space Six: Footprints on the Journey

[Move to the place where learners can draw or write prayers on footprint worksheets and gather silently around it. Give each child a page of the two footprints. Invite them to write or draw prayers and messages of hope for refugees. Encourage the children to think about things like safety, education, health care, happiness, finding lost relatives and friends, returning home.]

Closing Prayer

[Gather the children's footprints, making them a focal point. For example, have them sit in a circle and place their footprint prayers in the center. You may also wish to light a candle. Finish by praying together. After the closing prayer, put the footprints, two by two, in the hallway of the school.]

*Jesus,
friend and brother,
You know what it is like
to be hungry and thirsty.
You know what it feels like
to be a stranger who is made to feel unwelcome.
You know the suffering of all
who have lost everything.
We pray that by showing our care
for refugees,
we may show love for our neighbor
and be closer to you.*

Amen



Siria, Afganistán, Somalia, Sudán del Sur, Sudán, República Democrática del Congo, República Centroafricana, Myanmar, Eritrea, Irak



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PASSPORT



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