



Photo courtesy of Carmen Ramos

As missionary disciples, we are called to urgently respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. Today, a staggering 70 million people are currently displaced, many as a result of conflict and violence. We can lead the way by advocating on behalf of the rights of migrants and refugees to lead dignified lives.

From the Heart: Carmen's Story

As the former president of the lay apostolic organization Asociación Jóvenes Para Cristo/Young Adults for Christ (AJPC), Carmen Ramos is fearless when speaking about putting our faith into action. So, when she had the opportunity to participate in the National Catholic Council for Hispanic Ministry's Advocacy Day, she jumped at the chance. As part of a delegation from California, Carmen prepared to meet with members of Congress and their staff to share letters from members of AJPC at the national level that addressed the need to support migrants and refugees—an issue close to her heart.

The night before the meeting, Carmen was asked to prepare a personal testimony. She offered prayers to the Virgin Mary asking for the right words to express herself, knowing that God

would use her as a channel, as she put it, to speak for, "the needs of each of my brothers and sisters and those whom I come to advocate for." Their needs, she explains, "made me speak from the heart."

Being an advocate can sometimes feel uncomfortable. It may seem easier to share our intentions in private prayer rather than in public. But the more we learn about issues affecting our brothers and sisters around the world, the more we must lift our own voices. By meeting with—or simply writing letters to—congresspeople, joining prayer walks and sharing social media posts, we can work for changes that benefit the common good.

Now, when an unprecedented number of people are on the move, we must be advocates. We must lead the way in cultivating support for policies that help our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters exercise their right to lead dignified lives and ultimately thrive.

As Pope Francis reminds us, "we must [...] view [refugees] as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situation." When we make the human connection, how can we not respond to others' needs?

Carmen looks to the Blessed Mother as a model, comparing advocacy to intercessions. "Imagine if our Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary, would not advocate or intercede for our requests, what would happen?" she asks. "We must shout and say, 'Here I am for the one who cannot speak, the one who cannot raise their voice, for the one who is afraid, for the one who is not encouraged.'"

You can join Carmen and a movement of thousands across the United States to lead the way to a world where the most vulnerable members of our human family can thrive.

**Join us at crs.org/leadtheway
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