



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Atlantic-Midwest Province
JPIC Department

Novena for Las Posadas

Las Posadas Navideñas is a Mexican religious tradition that commemorates Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem and their struggle to find refuge there. For nine nights (a novena), from December 16-24, neighbors recreate the events described in the Gospels, as Mary and Joseph were denied shelter by many, until one innkeeper at last allowed them to sleep in his barn—and there, Jesus was born. The novena culminates with a celebration that echoes the rejoicing of the shepherds and angels at the birth of the Christ Child.

The AMSSND Immigration Committee invites you to participate in solidarity by praying a novena that we hope will open our hearts to welcoming Christ. While we might be far removed from the Bethlehem of 2000 years ago, Jesus tells us in Matthew 25 that when we encounter strangers, we encounter him: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Thus, we are graced with the presence of Christ in a very real way by immigrants who come to our shores seeking refuge and a better life. In accord with the "inextricable connection" of the SSNDs to the immigrant experience, as affirmed by the AMSSND Corporate Stance on Immigration, join us in praying this novena in solidarity with migrants and refugees.



Opening Prayer

God of our Advents, once again we enter this season of waiting when we cry out “Come, come Lord Jesus.” We wait for so many things, but deep within our hearts, we wait for the coming of your kingdom of peace and justice, of compassion and love for all peoples.

Reflection

Each day, take a moment to learn about one challenge facing migrant people today, and view the corresponding short video. Reflect on the people and experiences you encounter, and consider participating in the suggested action. (See below.)

Closing Prayer

(As you pray, hold in your heart a special intention for the migrants facing the challenges you learned about today.)

God of the journey, God of the traveler, draw near to us. Fill us with the Spirit’s desire to shape a future full of hope for our brothers and sisters who are searching for new homes, longing for respite. Give us the courage to open the doors of our hearts and our country to our neighbors, and give us the grace to build a society of justice and compassion.

We pray for our legislators, as they craft new immigration legislation—may they find the wisdom and courage to enact policies that do justice for our country and for those who would migrate here.

Move us to new frontiers as we remember how you crossed every border between Divinity and humanity to make your home with us. Move us to new frontiers, for we are all migrants journeying with you and one another toward your Kingdom.

We ask this through Christ, in whom we are one. Amen.

Day 1 *Fleeing Violence*

There are approximately [80 million people](#) around the world who have been forced to leave their homes due to violence or persecution; nearly 35 million are international migrants classified as refugees or asylum-seekers. The United States accepted [fewer than 12,000](#) of these people for resettlement in the last fiscal year, while Canada leads the world in resettlement efforts both [numerically](#) and as a [percentage of GDP](#).

- Video Reflection: Actress Minnie Driver gives voice to the words of [a mother forced to flee to a refugee camp with her children](#).

- Suggested Action: Urge your representatives to enact policies that uphold the dignity and rights of refugees and asylum seekers ([United States](#); [Canada](#)).

Day 2 Fleeing Climate

“[Environmentally displaced](#) persons” refers to “persons who are displaced within their country of habitual residence or who have crossed an international border and for whom environmental degradation, deterioration or destruction is a major cause of their displacement, although not necessarily the sole one.” The first half of 2020 saw nearly 10 million more people environmentally displaced.

- Video Reflection: [Dear Matafele Peinen](#), by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner
- Suggested Action: Today, learn more about [climate change](#) and resolve to live more sustainably ([click here](#) for ideas about changes you can make).

Day 3 Work and Participation

According to the [Migration Policy Institute](#), “Barriers to the recognition of foreign academic and professional credentials and experience are widely recognized as an impediment to the international mobility of skilled professionals and to immigrant integration. The result can be underemployment or unemployment for foreign professionals—a phenomenon referred to as ‘brain waste.’ As the research here demonstrates, the resulting waste of human capital represents a loss to employers, host communities, and immigrants themselves.” Also, during the Covid-19 pandemic in [Canada](#) and the [United States](#), “migrants and undocumented workers play key roles as health-care workers, grocery store clerks, cleaners, care workers, truckers and agricultural workers.”

- Video Reflections: [Daniela Zelaya](#); [Immigrant essential workers are at risk during Covid-19](#)
- Suggested Action: Urge representatives to ensure that immigrants and refugees are included in pandemic relief efforts ([United States](#); [Canada](#)).

Day 4 Discrimination

In the [United States](#), “Immigrants experience discrimination in work places (e.g., exploitation, immigration raids), housing (e.g., residential segregation), and access to and quality of health care,” and corresponding racial discrimination has deleterious effects on immigrant health. Nearly 60 percent of Hispanic people [report](#) experiencing discrimination in the U.S., and in 2019, hate crimes against Latinos [increased nearly nine percent](#). In [Canada](#), nearly two-thirds of immigrants fear rising discrimination.

- Video Reflection: [Sixteen-year-old Miriam urges us to change the way we think about immigrants](#)
- Suggested Action: Today, resolve to counter any discriminatory, derogatory, or misinformed remarks concerning immigrant people with the truth of their dignity and circumstances.

Day 5 Unjust Detainment

“The immigrant detention system contributes to the misconception that immigrants are criminals and a threat to our unity, security and well-being; it engenders despair, divides families, causes asylum-seekers to relive trauma, leads many to forfeit their legal claims, and fails to treat immigrants with dignity and respect. ... Conditions at detention facilities are particularly ill-suited and harmful to children.” (USCCB, “[Unlocking Human Dignity](#)” Report).

- Video Reflection: [Hear the Words of Detained Migrant Children](#)
- Suggested Action: Today, send a Christmas card to an immigrant detained in the U.S. You could say, “*FELIZ NAVIDAD! Que el Señor les bendiga grandemente con el protección, la amor y la luz.*” (Merry Christmas! May the Lord greatly bless you with protection, love, and light.) Below are some addresses to use:
 - Annunciation House, Casa Teresa, 815 Myrtle Avenue, El Paso, Texas 79901
 - Humanitarian Respite Center C/o Catholic Charities, San Juan Office, 700 North Virgen de San Juan Blvd., San Juan, TX 78589

Day 6 Family Separation

There are at least [545 children](#) who were separated from their parents at the U.S. border as early as 2017, who still have not been reunited with their families. The policy was meant to deter families seeking asylum. [Deportations](#), too, separate families: more than 6 million U.S. citizen children have at least one undocumented family member. From 2013-2018, more than 231,000 people deported had American citizen children, and in the [first half of 2019](#), nearly 15,000 more were deported. In [Canada](#), if a child’s parents are threatened with deportation, they can apply for an application for permanent residence on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds. However, “delays in processing of H&C applications are leading to more and more people being deported from Canada before their H&C application has been reviewed, in other words before the best interest of the child has even been ... given ‘primary consideration.’” When a parent is deported, household income drops by half and children are faced with unique barriers to flourishing.

- Video Reflection: [Jesus Ramirez](#)
- Suggested Action: Today, read [this fact sheet](#) on immigration (U.S.) or “[Five Myths about Immigrants](#)” (Canada), so you can counter the misinformation offered as justification for the unjust treatment of immigrants; [Urge your government to expedite refugee family reunification](#) (Canada).

Day 7 DACA

DACA stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The program offers some legal status to young people who were brought to the United States as children without proper documentation, allowing them to work and attend school without fear of deportation. It does not offer a path to citizenship or make them eligible for federal scholarships or other funding. For recipients of DACA—often called Dreamers—the United States is the only home they have ever really known, but their status is in limbo since the Trump Administration is continuing efforts to shut down the program. The only permanent solution is legislative action from Congress. Nearly [700,000 individuals are DACA recipients](#), and nearly 1.5 million people live in households with a DACA recipient—including more than 250,000 U.S. citizen children of Dreamers. DACA youth alone contribute approximately [42 billion dollars](#) to GDP, annually.

- Video Reflection: [Immigrant Heroes: Pandemic Essential Workers](#)
- Suggested Action: Consider donating funds marked for undocumented immigrants or DACA recipients and their families to your parish or local schools; [Urge your Senators to pass the Dream Act of 2019](#) (U.S.)

Day 8 Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

In the United States, TPS is meant to grant relief to people who are unable to return to their home countries safely due to political, environmental, or other instability. The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security has allowed TPS to expire for Honduras, Nepal, El Salvador, Haiti, and Nicaragua—though many recipients from these nations have been in the U.S. for decades, and their home countries remain unstable. This is being challenged in court. According to the [National Immigration Forum](#), in addition to devastating families, the termination of TPS will have a negative impact on the economy: “TPS holders from El Salvador, Honduras, and Haiti contribute a combined [\\$4.5 billion](#) in pre-tax wages or salary income annually to our nation’s gross domestic product. The total Social Security and Medicare contributions of those individuals is estimated at more than [\\$6.9 billion](#) over a ten year span. An estimated [130,000](#) TPS holders are working as ‘essential critical infrastructure workers’ working shoulder to shoulder with Americans during the coronavirus pandemic and helping with our economic recovery in a number of industries including healthcare and food services.”

- Video Reflection: [TPS Holders Need Permanent Protections: Roxana’s Story](#)
- Suggested Action: Today, smile and greet everyone you meet to practice being a welcoming presence to your neighbors; [Urge your representatives to support a path to permanency for TPS holders](#) (U.S.)

Day 9 Welcome, Protect, Promote, Integrate

[Pope Francis, Message for 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees:](#)

Dear brothers and sisters, our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration can be summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Yet these verbs do not apply only to migrants and refugees. They describe the Church's mission to all those living in the existential peripheries, who need to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated. If we put those four verbs into practice, we will help build the city of God and man. We will promote the integral human development of all people. We will also help the world community to come closer to [the goals of sustainable development](#) that it has set for itself and that, lacking such an approach, will prove difficult to achieve.

In a word, it is not only the cause of migrants that is at stake; it is not just about them, but about all of us, and about the present and future of the human family. Migrants, especially those who are most vulnerable, help us to read the "signs of the times". Through them, the Lord is calling us to conversion, to be set free from exclusivity, indifference and the throw-away culture. Through them, the Lord invites us to embrace fully our Christian life and to contribute, each according to his or her proper vocation, to the building up of a world that is more and more in accord with God's plan.

- Video Reflection: [I love my undocumented people](#), by Yosimar Reyes
- Suggested Action: Today, consider making a donation to an organization that supports migrants and refugees. Some suggestions are below:
 - [Annunciation House](#)
 - [Catholic Charities' Humanitarian Respite Center](#)
 - [International Rescue Committee](#)
 - [Canadian Council for Refugees](#)

