

PRAYER FOR IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES March 2009

Preparation: A table covered with a scarf or shawl that a woman might wear. On the table place bread, a cup of wine, one large candle OR a small candle for each person in the group.

Call to Prayer:

Leader: Hear the word of God from the Torah: "God defends the cause of the orphan and widow, and loves the foreigner, giving to each food and clothes. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt."

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

ALL: Our God is a God who loves the stranger!

Leader: Hear the word of the prophet Micah: "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God."

Micah 6:8

ALL: God's people are a people of mercy!

Source: Adapted from a prayer prepared by Canadian Inter-Church Committee for Refugees, Refugee Rights Day, March 2000

Gathering in the "Meeting Tent"

Leader: Today we bring into the shelter of our prayer all those who have been uprooted from their homes and communities—

ALL: people who are compelled to flee for their lives, to leave their land and culture, and live apart from their families.

With them, we mourn their loss of dignity, community, resources, and employment. ***Pause to give individuals a chance to mention immigrants and refugees by name.***

Leader: We especially pray for women who are the majority of those displaced.

ALL: *We remember women* who keep families together in spite of the overwhelming odds of poverty, hostility, and violence. ***Pause to mention individuals by name.***

We remember women who have been sexually assaulted and brutalized on their journey to find a living wage to sustain themselves and their families. ***Mention individuals by name***

We remember women who have lost children to sickness, hunger, and exposure in flight, in refugee camps and in gang-plagued neighborhoods. ***Mention individuals by name.***

Leader: We remember refugee and immigrant children—



Sahrawis refugees look inside of a tent in the refugee camps in the Algeria border with the Western Sahara. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic is a land divided by a thirty year old conflict. The United Nations says this is the longest and largest territorial conflict in the world. DRC. / UNHCR / F. Fontanini / May 2008, © All rights reserved.

ALL: the millions whose lives are scarred by danger, exploitation, desperate poverty and separation from parents. ***Mention children by name***

Leader: God of Mercy and Compassion, You meet us on the way and abide with us always.

ALL: Help us find ways to stand with our sisters and brothers who simply want a chance to survive and prosper in their home countries. And when there is no such chance or when it is painfully slow in coming, help us act with compassion, care and commitment so as to be the ***tent*** in which they can be restored in your loving presence and find safe shelter among us. ***Mention by name people and organizations who are havens for immigrants and refugees.***

Source: Adapted from World Council of Churches "In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples," 1997.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 54:2-3; 14

***For thus says our God: Enlarge the space of your tent,
Stretch out your tent cloths to the limit.
Lengthen your ropes and strengthen your stakes.
For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,
And your descendants will inherit the earth. . .***

***In righteousness you shall be established;
You shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;
And from terror, for it shall not come near you.***

Response: Psalm 91

You who dwell in the secret place of the Most High
Who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
Say to our God, "You are my refuge and fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

For the Holy One will rescue you from the snare of the fowler
And deliver you from the destroying plague.

God will cover you with pinions,
and spread out her wings that you may take refuge.
God's faithfulness is a protecting shield.

You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day,
Nor the pestilence that roams the darkness,
Nor the devastation that ravages at noon.

Because you have made the Faithful One your refuge,
the Most High your stronghold,
No evil shall befall you, no affliction come near your tent.

For God gives angels to guard you in all your ways.
With their hands they shall support you.

“Whoever clings to me, I will deliver,” says our God.
“I will protect the one who knows my name.

“When she calls to me, I will answer;
when he is in distress, I will be with him.
I will rescue them and honor them.

With long life I will satisfy them and show them my saving power.”

Table Prayer *(with unleavened bread and wine)*

Leader: As we bless and share this bread, we remember the first Passover dinner when the Jewish people ate their meal poised for flight from bondage. It reminds us of refugees, who, seeking safety, have to flee their homes in the middle of the night. It reminds us of immigrants who flee the abuse and economic bondage of their homelands. We pray:

ALL: God, our father and mother, give us this day our daily bread
And empower us to share it with others.

Pass the bread.

Leader: As we bless and share this cup of wine, we remember the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. We remember Jesus’ love poured out, his life given so that all may know that they are the beloved of God.

ALL: Jesus, as we share this cup of Life, we pray that you will help us find ways to fill the cups of those who thirst for a chance to live with dignity.

Pass the cup.

Benediction: *Each one holds a lit candle OR the Leader raises a lit candle and prays:*

Leader: Fan into flame the gift of God’s Spirit, the light of Christ, in you.

May the spark of the divine in you
grow into a fire that gladdens your heart
and warms strangers as well as family and friends.

May the firelight shine in your eyes
Like a candle set in a window,
Like a lantern hanging on a tent post,
Bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm.

May you ever have a kindly greeting for people
As you walk along the roads of life.

And may our Gracious God who abides in each and among all
Bless you kindly and give you peace.

ALL: Amen.

Source: Adapted from World Council of Churches “In Solidarity with Uprooted Peoples,” November 1997.