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Dear Friends,

In his 1 January 2018 Message for the World Day of Peace "[Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace](#)", Pope Francis urges all Christians to view global migration as an opportunity to build peace. Calling on each of us to embrace all those forced to flee their homelands for social, economic, cultural, or environmental reasons, he challenges individuals, governments, and institutions to [welcome, protect, promote and integrate](#) all who come to our countries in search of peace.

We invite you to spend time between the [World Day of Peace \(January 1\)](#) and the [World Day of Migrants and Refugees \(January 14\)](#) internalizing the Pope's message and discerning additional ways in which you might welcome newcomers to your country using the reflection which follows.

May we all be builders of peace in the New Year!



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2018 World Day of Peace Reflection



Millions of people are caught up in the phenomenon of migration, but they are not statistics! They are men and women, children, young and elderly people, who are searching for somewhere to live in peace.

Benedict XVI, Angelus, 15 January 2012

In his 1 January 2018 Message for the World Day of Peace “[Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace](#),” calls all of us to foster a “contemplative gaze” – one that recognizes that we all belong to one human family, all have the same right to enjoy the goods of Earth, and all desire peace. In this prayer, we invite you to cultivate this contemplative gaze by meditatively reading the following selections from the Pope’s message and reflecting on the suggested questions.

First Reflection

In a spirit of compassion, let us embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands.¹

Many destination countries have seen the spread of rhetoric decrying the risks posed to national security or the high cost of welcoming new arrivals, and thus demeaning the human dignity due to all as sons and daughters of God. Those who, for what may be political reasons, foment fear of migrants instead of building peace are sowing violence, racial discrimination and xenophobia, which are matters of great concern for all those concerned for the safety of every human being.²

All indicators available to the international community suggest that global migration will continue for the future. Some consider this a threat. For my part, I ask you to view it with confidence as an opportunity to build peace.³

- In your culture, what xenophobic rhetoric or coded messages about migrants and refugees are prominent in daily conversations, political discourse or the media?
- How might your own views about migrants have been unconsciously shaped by such rhetoric and messages?
- What steps can we take – individually, communally, and societally - to unmask such rhetoric and messages and uproot their effects in ourselves and our societies?

¹ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 1, paragraph 2.

² Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 2, paragraph 4.

³ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 2, paragraph 5.

Second Reflection

Offering asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and victims of human trafficking an opportunity to find the peace they seek requires a strategy combining four actions: [welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating](#).⁴

“**Welcoming**” calls for expanding legal pathways for entry and no longer pushing migrants and displaced people towards countries where they face persecution and violence. It also demands balancing our concerns about national security with concern for fundamental human rights.⁵

“**Protecting**” has to do with our duty to recognize and defend the inviolable dignity of those who flee real dangers in search of asylum and security, and to prevent their being exploited.⁶

“**Promoting**” entails supporting the integral human development of migrants and refugees.⁷

“**Integrating**”, lastly, means allowing refugees and migrants to participate fully in the life of the society that welcomes them, as part of a process of mutual enrichment and fruitful cooperation in service of the integral development of the local community.⁸

- As a society and as individuals, how can we balance legitimate concerns for safety and national security with our commitment to human dignity and fundamental rights?
- How can we challenge ourselves to move beyond sympathy for migrants and refugees to active participation in the Pope’s four-fold strategy of welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating?

Closing Prayer

A Prayer from Pope Francis⁹

Merciful God,
 we pray to you for all the men, women and children
 who have died after leaving their homelands in search of a better life.
 Though many of their graves bear no name,
 to you each one is known, loved and cherished.
 May we never forget them, but honour their sacrifice

⁴ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 4, paragraph 1.

⁵ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 4, paragraph 2.

⁶ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 4, paragraph 3.

⁷ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 4, paragraph 4.

⁸ Francis, 1 January 2018, “Migrants and refugees: Men and women in search of peace,” section 4, paragraph 5.

⁹ Francis. “A Remembering of the Victims of Migration,” Meeting with the People of Lesbos and with the Catholic Community, 16 April 2016.

with deeds more than words.

We entrust to you all those who have made this journey,
enduring fear, uncertainty and humiliation,
in order to reach a place of safety and hope.

Just as you never abandoned your Son
as he was brought to a safe place by Mary and Joseph,
so now be close to these, your sons and daughters,
through our tenderness and protection.

In caring for them may we seek a world
where none are forced to leave their home
and where all can live in freedom, dignity and peace.

Merciful God and Father of all,
wake us from the slumber of indifference,
open our eyes to their suffering,
and free us from the insensitivity
born of worldly comfort and self-centredness.
Inspire us, as nations, communities and individuals,
to see that those who come to our shores are our brothers and sisters.
May we share with them the blessings we have received from your hand,
and recognize that together, as one human family,
we are all migrants, journeying in hope to you, our true home,
where every tear will be wiped away,
where we will be at peace and safe in your embrace.



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