

SALT & LIGHT

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MAKING ROOM

In honor Advent, the feast of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, (Dec. 12 and Christmas this edition of Salt & Light focuses on refugees and migrants.

In this current political climate, it is remarkably common for people to deny the humanity of refugees and immigrants by citing their fears of terrorism or the illegality of some people's journeys across the border. There seems to be little concern for the citizen children left behind by a deported mother, the carefully screened refugee family condemned to more years in the abysmal conditions of a refugee camp or the children fleeing northward from unendurable violence in some Latin countries.



In this season of Advent, let us move beyond politics to reflect on the journeys of people through the eyes of the Christ Child, born to a finite body, though infinite in nature, of poor parents who journeyed far from home when they needed to protect their child. He grows to become a teacher who broke down barriers between men and women, believers and unbelievers, those who belonged and those who were outsiders. The issues around immigration are not simple to resolve, but as part of the human family we are called to look through the eyes of our most desperate brothers and sisters.

SHARE THE JOURNEY FOR ADVENT

Here are some special resources for Advent from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

when every night is winter

Lord, you split no sky when you came among us,
And you rose not from the sea.
A star was seen in the heavens – but only by those who looked.
A choir of angels was heard – but only by those who listened.
No thunder, no storm, no cataclysm announced you,
Just the cry of a lowly refugee,
Turning to no one, turning to everyone,
Saying, "Will you let me in?"
And so, when every night is winter,
And every town is Bethlehem,

And every inn seems filled,
And on every ear those words are heard,
"Will you let me in?"

May we have eyes to see the star,
May we have ears to hear the choir,
May we have hearts that finally speak:
Yes, yes, by all means, come in.
Come in and stay.

An Advent Toolkit: <https://www.sharejourney.org/resource-library/advent-toolkit/>

A moving story: <https://cliniclegal.org/news/posada-catholic/christmas-border-tale-posada-reveals-mary-and-martha-soup-kitchen>

An Advent Retreat: <https://www.crs.org/resource-center/holy-family-refugee-family-digital-advent-retreat>

CARE FOR CREATION

Syrians were on the move even before the current conflict began. Drought had driven many to the cities resulting in severe overcrowding. Conflict made the situation unendurable. In the coming decades, climate change will increase the number of people who are displaced due to flooding or drought, especially from the world's poorest, most crowded countries. How will the wealthier countries manage the inevitable influx while they, also, are dealing with the stresses of deadlier storms and wildfires?

Now is the time to stop putting additional carbon into the atmosphere and implement sustainable agriculture methods that sequester carbon back into the soil. What significant changes can you make this Advent to protect our earth for the generations to come?

"The person that *takes heed* is one that, in the noise of the world, doesn't let himself be overwhelmed by distraction or by superficiality, but lives in a full and aware way, with concern first of all *for others*. With this attitude, we are aware of the tears and the needs of our neighbor and we can also grasp his human and spiritual capacities and qualities. The person that heeds then turns also *to the world*, trying to counter the indifference and cruelty in it, and rejoicing over the treasures of beauty that also exist and are guarded."

Pope Francis, 12/3/17

REFUGEE REPORT

From Catholic Family Center's Jim Morris, Vice President, Family Services and Lisa Hoyt, Director, Refugee, Immigration and Employment Services:

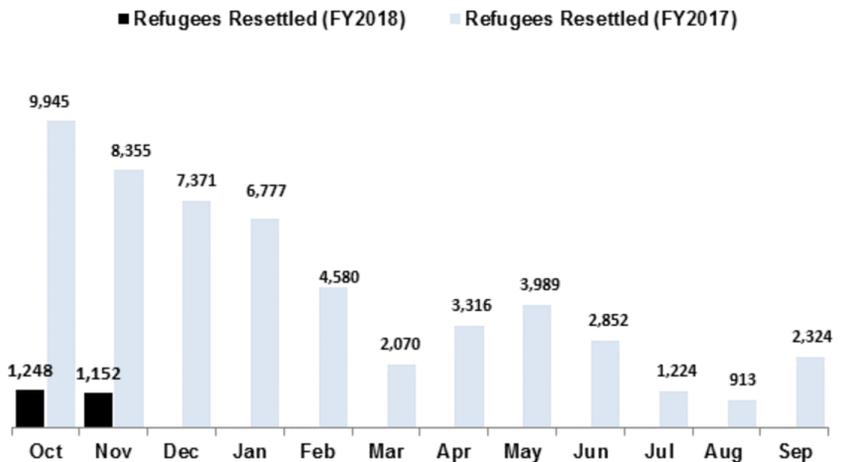
The picture of refugee resettlement on the national level continues to look bleak. While the administration set an admission ceiling of 45,000 refugees for fiscal year 2018, there has been no intentional effort by the administration to ensure the U.S. reaches that goal and provide that relief so desperately needed by refugees who have no other recourse for durable solutions. In concert with that lack of will are a variety of additional obstacles that will stall refugee admissions for the foreseeable future including:

- New vetting requirements for refugees (yet undefined by the administration) which will require previously travel-ready refugees to be "re-vetted" before being allowed to resettle. It is likely that many refugees' previously approved security and health checks will time out and will need to be redone as refugees are put through the new vetting measures, causing further delays.
- Executive Order banning admission of nationals from 11 countries mentioned in the Security Advisory Opinion (SAO) for 90 days. Those countries include Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen and represent 60% of all refugees currently in the pipeline to resettle in the U.S.
- The temporary halt of Visa 93 case movement until new vetting requirements are established. Visa 93 case individuals are spouses and minor children of persons already admitted to the U.S. as refugees. At present there are about 2,000 Visa 93 cases – wives, husbands, sons and daughters – who are affected and unable to reunite with their immediate family member in the U.S., even though their applications have been approved by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). While refugee arrivals to the U.S. remain at historically low levels, there is legitimate concern about the continued health of the national resettlement network. Resettlement programs and the refugee assistance collaborations that have been built across the country are in danger of losing their capacity to assist refugees in their communities. Our national agencies have had little success in gaining assurances from federal refugee agencies within the Department of State and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) regarding their intended direction and maintenance of refugee programs designed to assist newly arrived refugees and promote their self-sufficiency. Amid that

uncertainty, many refugee support agencies (and particularly smaller ones) are facing significant challenges and some may be forced to close.

National Resettlement Numbers to Date

Only 2,400 refugees have arrived in the U.S. in the 2018 fiscal year to date (10/1/17 to 11/28/17). At this time in fiscal year 2017, 18,300 refugees had already arrived. The below chart reflects national refugee admissions over the previous and current fiscal years. One spot of positive news to relate is in regards to people with Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs). SIVs are a special class of refugees that include Iraqi and Afghan nationals who did contract work or interpreting for the U.S. 2,673 SIVs have been admitted to date in the past 2 months, and it looks as though this group's arrival numbers will exceed current national projections.



SUPPORT DREAMERS

Although our country's broken immigration system is in urgent need of repair, that is unlikely to happen soon. Meanwhile, we may still be able to protect a small group of immigrants, DACA-eligible young people, from deportation. From the USCCB: "The Catholic Bishops have long supported these immigrant youths and their families who are contributors to our economy, academic standouts in our universities and leaders in our parishes. They exemplify the extraordinary contributions that immigrants provide to our nation. These youths should not be forced to live in constant fear that they will be deported and separated from their families. It is both our moral duty and in our nation's best interest to protect them and help them reach their God-given potential."

Please add your name to those who support protection for these young people. Go to <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/action-alerts/share-journey-funding-dreamer-action-alert/>