

112th WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES 2026

THEME: "EVEN JUST ONE OF THESE CHILDREN"

MEETING WITH THE CHILDREN

We begin with a welcoming song

1. INTRODUCTION

Dear children, today we celebrate the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, and this year the theme chosen by the Holy Father is "**Even just one of these children.**"

With the fatherly love he holds for children, the Holy Father invites us today to focus on the lives of those in a foreign land—and especially on children like you—who have left their homes and become vulnerable due to the uncertainty of their situation.

But who are these migrants?

Dear children, migrants are people who, for various reasons, leave their homeland and culture in search of a better life. Some migrate voluntarily to find work, pursue their studies, or join their families. Others migrate not because they chose to, but because they are forced to flee—due to war, natural disasters (such as floods or earthquakes), because their home is no longer safe, because they are hungry, or because they have been driven from their land...

This situation makes migrant children even more vulnerable; they are the ones who suffer the most.

In short, migrants are people who suffer greatly. The Gospel invites us to open our hearts and welcome these people into our homes, our schools, wherever we meet them. So, if we want to be good—as Jesus desires—we are called to welcome those whom Jesus places on our path, to come to their aid and help them. For whatever we do for the little ones, we do for Jesus; and if we welcome a migrant, it is as if we were welcoming Jesus himself.

2. BRIEF REFLECTION (2–3 MINUTES)

Anyone coming from another country is often considered a foreigner, yet to God, no one is a stranger. In the Gospel of Matthew (19:13–14), when mothers brought their children to Jesus to ask for a blessing, the disciples rebuked them, but Jesus asked that

the children be allowed to come to Him. Because in Him, there is a place for everyone. His Heart is open to all.

Just as Jesus removes the obstacles that prevent us from encountering Him, we too must welcome everyone—even those who do not belong to our own people—because in Him, we are all brothers and sisters. Children and vulnerable people, in particular, need to find tender hands ready to welcome them. We must open our arms to receive them and show them kindness. We must share what we have, point the way to salvation, and help other children integrate into our community—in the parish, at school, and in places where we play...

Who are these "little ones" Jesus speaks of? The "little ones" in the Gospel are those who entrust themselves completely to God. Certainly, children—innocent and pure creatures—entrust themselves to Him most easily, but so do those who show they are in need of help. At the time of His birth, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—the Holy Family of Nazareth—were forced to flee to Egypt. The Apostle Matthew recounts how King Herod's fear and thirst for power drove him to order the massacre of all infants under the age of two, fearing that he might one day be replaced by Jesus, whom the Magi called "King of Kings." Jesus, Mary, and Joseph had to travel a long way to reach Egypt.

When people flee their homes or countries because of a threatening calamity, they hope to find a better life and a warm welcome. Yet, migrants often do not know what their final destination will be or what awaits them.

When they meet brothers and sisters who love them, they open their hearts, sharing their experiences and their suffering, and entrust themselves with confidence to the hands of the good God, just as a child entrusts himself to his mother's hands. Although these people may seem deprived of everything, they are never deprived of God; they retain their dignity and show us the face of the suffering Christ asking for help—the face of the Father who lives in communion.

So, dear children, let us keep our hearts open to everyone, just as God does, and welcome these little migrants as if we were welcoming God Himself. For one day He will say to us: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me."

ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AGED 2 TO 9

No. 1. "A PLACE FOR YOU"



Arrange chairs or cushions in a large circle.

Invite one child to step into the center of the circle, while the other children make room for them, shifting aside and welcoming them with a smile.

The facilitator explains: "In our group, no child should be

left alone. Every child has a place. We want to open our hearts to each and every one of them." This activity helps children grasp the concrete meaning of welcoming others.

No. 2. THE "OPENING HEART" GAME



Give each child a small paper heart. Inside, each child draws a way to welcome someone - such as sharing a toy, helping one another, smiling, listening, playing together, or saying a kind word. All the hearts are then gathered together to form one large "collective heart."

No. 3. "I SEE YOUR FACE"



Children pair up and look at each other for a few seconds, smiling.

Then, each child says to others: "You are important to me."

The facilitator explains that behind every migrant or refugee child, there is a face, a name, a story, and a person who deserves respect.

No. 4. THE BASKET OF SMALL GESTURES



Prepare a basket containing pictures representing various actions: helping, sharing, listening, comforting, welcoming, and smiling.

Each child picks a picture and acts out the action shown.

The other children try to guess the gesture.

No. 5. THE STORY OF "LITTLE ANDREA"

Tell a short, child-friendly story about a boy who arrives in a new country with his family. He doesn't know anyone and does not understand the language.

Another child decides to approach him, smiles at him, and invites him to play.

After the story, ask:

How did Andrea feel at the beginning?

What made him happy?

What can we do when a new child joins us?

No. 6. CREATING "THE HELPING HAND"



Each child traces their hand on a sheet of paper and cuts it out.

On each finger, they write or draw a way to help someone who is lonely or has just arrived.

All the hands are then glued onto a large poster bearing the message:

"A HELPING HAND CAN

CHANGE A LIFE."

No. 7. THE FRIENDSHIP TRAIN



The children line up one behind the other to form a friendship train. The first child represents someone ready to welcome a new friend. Each child joins the friend in front until the whole group is gathered together.

The facilitator explains: "No child should be left behind.

Let's walk together and make room for every child."

No. 8. PRAYER TIME



The children gather in front of a cross and an image of Jesus.

They pray together for migrant and refugee children, saying: *"Jesus, take care of all the children who are far from home. Give them to friends, protect their families, and place people on their path who will welcome them with love. Amen."*

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 10 TO 15



No. 1. "IF I WERE IN THEIR SHOES"

Present the young people with various situations experienced by a migrant child:

- Arriving at a new school;
- Not understanding the language;
- Being separated from friends;
- Not knowing anyone;
- Fearing rejection.

Each young person chooses a situation and writes down how they would feel in that child's place.

Afterwards, they share their reflections.

No. 2. THE 5-MINUTE CHALLENGE

The young people have five minutes to reflect on this question: "If a new migrant student were to join our class tomorrow, what could we do to make them feel welcome?"

Then, they propose concrete actions.

No. 3. THE WALL THAT DIVIDES AND THE BRIDGE THAT UNITES

Divide the young people into small groups. On a sheet of paper, they draw a wall and write down things that can separate people: **Rejection – Mockery – Prejudice – Racism – Indifference – Loneliness.**

On another sheet, they draw a bridge and write down things that can bring people together: **Friendship – Respect – Listening – Solidarity – Welcoming – Sharing.** The two creations are then presented to the group.

No. 4. THE MESSAGE I WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE

Each young person imagines arriving alone in an unfamiliar country.

They write a short sentence they would like to hear from someone approaching them. The sentences are then read aloud.

This activity helps young people understand the importance of words of welcome.

No. 5. "JUST ONE GESTURE"

Each group is given a specific scenario:

- A child is alone.
- A new student arrives in class.
- A migrant family doesn't know anyone.
- A young person is being mocked because of their background.



The group must come up with a gesture or initiative that could help. Each group presents its ideas.

No. 6. THE CIRCLE OF SHARING

The young people sit in a circle.

Each person freely answers this question:

"What is the most important thing I could do to make someone feel welcome?"

Every answer is listened to without judgment.

No. 7. MY COMMITMENT

Each young person completes this sentence:

"So that even just one of these children feels welcome, this week I decide to..."

Commitments might include, for example:

Listening to someone, helping a lonely person, welcoming a new classmate, sharing bread, standing up for a rejected child, or praying for migrants and refugees.
The young people write down their commitments and place them before a cross.

No. 8. PRAYER OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

The young people compose a prayer together for migrants and refugees.

Each group prepares a part of the prayer:

- for migrant children;
- for separated families;
- for those who are suffering;
- for those who offer welcome;
- for peace in countries affected by conflict.

The prayer is then recited by everyone.

CONCLUSION

This day reminds us that Jesus does not ask us merely to care about a multitude of people. He invites us to look at each person individually.

"Even for just one of these children," we are called to open our hearts.

A child who is welcomed can find joy again.

A young person who is listened to can regain confidence.

A person who is helped can find hope again.

Today, we want to learn not to leave any child alone.

Because in the eyes of God, even a single child matters.

