

## Refugee pilgrimage for young people

### You will need:

- Laptop, speakers and screen
- Flipchart
- Map of the world (if possible, [Peters Projection](#))
- Cards with country names (below)
- Pilgrimage items (or use the photos below): Loaf of bread, rucksack, passport, family photos, Country names each printed separately, Lampedusa Cross, and blank cards or slips of paper
- PowerPoint including film
- Pens
- 12 readers

**Time:** 60-70 minutes

### Pilgrimage preparation:

You will need an indoor or outdoor space to move around.

Place the pilgrimage items at different points around the space, with pens near the blank cards. Distribute the readings among the young people.

## Preparatory Session (15 mins)

### Introduction

- Nearly 80 million people around the world have been forced from their homes. (UNHCR 2019)
- Today we will think about them and share their hopes and dreams. CAFOD uses a special word for this, SOLIDARITY, sometimes described as “walking alongside” people. It doesn’t mean we actually walk with them but we do things which show them we care and want to help.
- “Welcoming the outsider” is one way to show mercy to other people during, and beyond, the Year of Mercy. When we are thinking of ways to help refugees have better lives, we are welcoming the outsider.

### Discussion: Who are refugees?

- The UN Refugee Agency describes refugees as people who have to move in order to save their lives or preserve their freedom. They have no protection in their own country.
- Ask: Why might refugees flee or leave their own country? Give students time to think and discuss in pairs, then take some ideas from the whole class. [Answers may include: war, poverty, climate change, or being persecuted - like being bullied - because of a different religion or viewpoint.]
- Refugees often take very dangerous journeys to find safety in another country. They hope for a better future where they will be safe. Refugee children and young people have the same sort of hopes and dreams for their futures as we have for ours.
- Ask: What are your hopes for your future? [Allow time to think and share ideas with the class.]

**Watch video:** Syrian refugee children in Greece share their hopes and dreams:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhEDB\\_H0A8M&list=PLCqV6mKXfbD9-lxiQw-vLs1KPIWv7ttVm&index=19&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhEDB_H0A8M&list=PLCqV6mKXfbD9-lxiQw-vLs1KPIWv7ttVm&index=19&t=0s)

After watching the video, discuss: What surprised you about what the children said?

## Pilgrimage (45-55 mins)

**Leader:** A pilgrimage is a prayerful journey which people make to a special place. Today, more people than ever before are now on forced journeys far from home. This pilgrimage is a way for us to show solidarity with all those fleeing war, poverty and persecution in our world. Along the way, we will reflect, “Who is my neighbour?”

Let us start by making the sign of the cross. In the name of the Father...

[Set off on your journey, you may choose to sing a hymn or to move in prayerful silence]

## **At point 1:** [Gather around the world map]

**Reader 1:** Nearly 80 million people in our world have been forced from their homes by war and persecution. We can go home today; they may never see their homes again. Let's stop to think about where today's refugees are coming from. These are the ten worst affected countries: Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Myanmar, Eritrea, Iraq.

[Volunteers/readers place each name on the map in the appropriate place]

**Reader 2:** Amina is living in a displaced people's camp in Darfur: "I was sleeping when I heard our village being attacked. I didn't know who was shooting at us or why, their faces were covered. First they came on camels and horses, then they came in heavy vehicles, and then they came on foot. There was so much screaming, people running, and fire everywhere. I was so afraid I just ran. I didn't even put my shoes on."

[Silence for prayer]

We pray for all the places in the world where there is war, where people have to leave their homes because of violence. Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer**

## **At point 2:** [Gather around the loaf of bread]

**Reader 3:** One in nine people will go to bed hungry tonight. Dire conditions for the world's poorest people are being made worse by climate change, which is hitting them first, and hardest. People must sometimes move to look for ways to make a living. Yet some people question their right to seek better lives for their families.

**Reader 4:** Seline Netoi lives on the Carteret islands in the South Pacific, where rising sea levels mean her whole community must leave before the islands are completely under water: "It's our home, it will be difficult to leave but we must. When the King Tide comes, water floods our home. If there is a cyclone or a tsunami, we'll be swept away. I was a war refugee and now I'll be a climate one."

[Silence for prayer]

We pray for everyone who is hungry around the world and for people who have had to leave their homes because of climate change. Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer**

## **At point 3:** [Gather around the passport]

**Reader 5:** Too often, people with certain religious beliefs, political views or ethnic backgrounds are persecuted by others who see them as different. This is a major cause of people leaving their homes and countries. Refugees often no longer have their nationality or identity. Yet in God's eyes we all share one true identity - as his children.

**Reader 6:** In Myanmar, a Muslim minority are being driven from their homes by violence. The government does not recognise them as citizens. Local Archbishop Charles Bo says, "It breaks my heart to see the rising hatred and religious intolerance in Myanmar. From the depths of my heart... I cry out two words to my brothers and sisters from all communities in my beloved country: 'peace' and 'love'."

[Silence for prayer]

We pray for places where people are attacked for their beliefs or their colour or their nationality, that everyone will live in harmony with each other and realise that they are all God's children. Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer**

## **At point 4:** [Gather around the rucksack]

**Reader 7:** Look down at what you are wearing. If you have a bag with you today, think about what's in it. Now close your eyes. Imagine you are being forced to leave your home by the sounds of fighting. (Pause) You can't pack, you just leave as you are. These clothes and the few things in your bag are all you will have for many weeks. You don't know if you will ever come home.

**Reader 8:** Aza is a 21-year-old mother with an infant son. She crossed to Greece in a boat after fleeing Syria: "They told us that there would be 35 people in our boat, but when we arrived, there were more than 200. We were in the sea and the engine stopped. It was full of smoke. My son was vomiting and he couldn't breathe. I was praying to God so he could save us. I saw lots of people pray. All of them were crying. And all of them were scared."

[Silence for prayer]

We pray for refugees on long journeys, we pray for safe passage, hearts filled with courage, strength to support children and the weak, and at the journey's end, a true welcome. Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer**

## **At point 5:** [Gather around the family photo]

**Reader 9:** Forced migration rips apart families and communities. Some are left behind because they are too weak, or there is not enough money to pay for their passage; some get lost or die on the way. Imagine being forced to choose between members of your family – who to take, who to leave.

[Point to the picture of a family with an empty chair. This picture is of a refugee family, the chair symbolises someone lost by the family on the journey. Invite students to place their own family photos or drawings around the picture]

**Reader 10:** Khawle is a Syrian mother of four who is now in a refugee camp in Lebanon. She looks at a photo of her family taken in the camp: "I couldn't bring all the members of my family with me. The youngest is with my mother. The bombs stopped us from being together... I don't have anything to be happy for, just to live like this, here in our tent. I feel sad to be here without all my children. A photograph speaks of family happiness, everyone smiling together. This photograph is full of tears."

[Silence for prayer]

We pray for families and friends separated by conflict and migration, that they may soon be reunited Lord in your mercy... **Hear our prayer** [Pause for silent prayer]

## **At point 6:** [Gather around the Lampedusa Cross]

**Reader 11:** On 3 October 2013, a boat carrying 500 refugees from Eritrea and Somalia sank off the little island of Lampedusa between Sicily and North Africa. Only 151 people survived. Francesco Tuccio, the local carpenter on Lampedusa, met some of the survivors, then collected some of the wreckage of the boat. He made crosses for the survivors as a symbol of hope for the future.

**Reader 12:** CAFOD asked Francesco to make some larger crosses, also using wood from wrecked boats. There is now at least one Lampedusa cross in every diocese in England and Wales. It is a sign of hope for all of us, that new life can arise despite the suffering that went before.

**Leader:** The Lampedusa cross also reminds us to pray for our sisters and brothers. In a moment we will do that, but first let's hear some signs of hope made possible thanks to our support for CAFOD.

**Reader 1:** Yasmin set up "B&Z" (Basmeh and Zeitooneh) a charity helping refugees in Lebanon. She said: "When I meet with the children at the B&Z learning centre, I feel their warmth and welcome. I see their eagerness to live and their happiness to be at the community centre, which has become a second home to many."

**Reader 2:** Yadviga from CAFOD visited a refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley, where Caritas Lebanon was providing food, shelter, healthcare and medical supplies. She said: "While playing with children and making lots of noise in their settlement, an elderly woman came up to me. She smiled and kissed me on my cheek. She told me she was pleased to see children laughing again."

**Reader 3:** Abdalkarim a refugee from Syria, arriving in Greece, said: "Thank you... In these aid camps for the first time after so many exhausting weeks, I felt I was treated as a human."

*(Pause)*

**Leader:** We are now going to write our own prayers of hope for refugees. Think about your own hopes and dreams for the future and why the refugees have been fleeing.

[Each person writes a prayer on their card. Encourage participants to think about things like safety, education, healthcare, happiness, finding lost relatives and friends, returning home].

## **Final prayer:**

[If possible, ask the young people to sit in a circle and to place their cards in the centre. You could light a candle]

**Leader:** Jesus, friend and brother,  
You know what it is like to be hungry and thirsty.  
You know what it feels like to be a stranger who is made to feel unwelcome.  
You know the suffering of all who have lost everything.  
We pray that by showing our care for refugees,  
We may show love for our neighbour and encounter you. **Amen**

**Pilgrimage items:**

Syria	Afghanistan
Somalia	South Sudan
Sudan	Democratic Republic of Congo
Central African Republic	Myanmar
Eritrea	Iraq







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