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# Prayer Service for Refugees

## Welcome

*Whoever is leading the service should welcome those who have gathered and provide an introduction to the Service. You may like to think of the reasons why the service was called, perhaps motivated by a recent event in the news or to commemorate a particular day.*

## Opening Prayer

L: Lord God, we gather here in prayer as brothers and sisters, as people created in your image and likeness. We come to offer up those who are forced to flee their homes in search of safety and who are marginalised as a result. We ask that you who made the journey to safety in Egypt may send your Spirit down upon us and be present with us, and with refugees everywhere.

**A: Amen**

## First Reading

**Genesis 18: 1-16** – *A son promised to Abraham and Sarah*

And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The Lord said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah

laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.”

## Second Reading

### **Matthew 25:31-46** – *Judgement of the nations*

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

## Reflection

*At this moment it would be a good opportunity for someone to say a few words reflecting upon the readings or perhaps on whatever might be poignant at that particular time.*

*It is often particularly powerful to allow some time in silence to allow people to pray for those who are forced to flee their homes.*

## Prayers of Intercession

*The prayer below have been written by the JRS UK team and reflect issues that we encounter in our work here in the UK. You may wish to add to or adapt these prayers, especially if the service is being held in response to a particular event or occasion.*

L: We now present our prayers to God.

R: We pray for peace in our world. We pray that there may be an end to violence, war and persecution, and anything that forces people to flee their homes. May all people be able to live their lives in peace.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for all those people who are currently making journeys in search of safety. May you extend your loving protection over them and keep them safe.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for all those who are waiting for decisions on their asylum claims here in the UK. May they receive positive answers and be granted protection and the chance to build a life here in the UK.

Lord, hear us

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for all those refugees who are forced into destitution here in the UK. May all people be given support and the opportunity to support themselves and live in dignity.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for all those who are detained in immigration removal centres. May they know the comfort of your presence in difficult moments of isolation.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for Parliamentarians and people in positions of power. We pray that they may show courage and compassion to bring about an asylum system that recognises the dignity of all.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for all those who accompany refugees. May they be given the strength to welcome refugees with love and remain alongside them as they navigate the complexities and challenges of the asylum system.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We pray for all those who have died trying to reach safety. May they rest in peace. We pray for all those who mourn them. May they be comforted in their grief.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: Let us spend a moment in silence now to bring our own intentions to the Lord.

Lord, hear us.

**A: Lord, graciously hear us.**

R: We ask for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary as we say together: Hail Mary.....

L: Lord God, we ask you to hear and grant these prayers through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

**A: Amen**

## Sign of Peace

Please offer a sign of peace to one another.

## Lighting Candles

*Lighting a candle is common in Christian prayer and you might decide to light a candle as part of your service, particularly if the service is one of remembrance. This may be done one at a time using votive candles if you are meeting in person or to encourage people to have a candle with them if you meet online. You may wish to use the following words to introduce this part of the service:*

Lighting a candle is common in Christian prayer. The light reminds us of the Light of Christ come into the world. We often light a candle as a sign of offering our prayer for

another. We encourage you now to come forward in turn to light a candle, offering up for one of the intentions we have just mentioned or for one of your own.

## JRS Prayer

**Lord Jesus**

**Give us courage to accompany others,  
for in walking at their side  
we find you there present with us.**

**Give us joy that we might serve others,  
for in tending wounds of those who suffer,  
we sense your healing grace at work in us.**

**Give us wisdom as we advocate for others,  
for in defending the downtrodden  
we hear your voice speak up for us.**

**Grant that in all we do,  
we may give you glory Lord;  
we return all we have in love to you, for you have given everything to us.**

**Amen**

## Final Prayer

L: Lord God, as we end this time of prayer may we go forward in a spirit of solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are forced to flee their homes. May our words and deeds witness your loving care for all people, especially those forced to the margins. May we bring your peace and hope, love and joy to all those we meet. Keep us and all who are present today in your loving protection. We ask all this through Christ Our Lord.

**A: Amen.**

## Final Blessing

*If an ordained minister is present you may like to end the service with a blessing for those present. Otherwise, you may end in the sign of the cross or whichever way feels natural to bring the service to a close.*

## Alternative Readings

### Scripture Readings:

- Exodus 12:33-42 - Israelites flight from Egypt
- Leviticus 19:33-34 - Treat the foreigners among you as a native born.
- Deuteronomy 10:17-19 - Called to the cause of the marginalised, particularly migrants and refugees.
- Psalm 6:2-9 – Cry to God for help.
- Psalm 61:1-4 - David finds spiritual refuge in the Lord.
- Matthew 2:13-18 - Holy Family's flight to Egypt.

### Other reflections & documents:

- Message of Pope Francis for the 107<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2021, *'Towards an ever wider "we"'*:  
[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20210503\\_world-migrants-day-2021.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20210503_world-migrants-day-2021.html)
- Pope Francis Homily at the Island of Lampedusa, 8 July 2013:  
[https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html)