



Migrants walk along a railroad track in Sayula de Aleman, Mexico, Aug. 22, 2024, during their journey toward the U.S. border. (OSV News/Angel Hernandez, Reuters)



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In a message ahead of the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the U.S. bishops' migration chair stressed Pope Francis' call for solidarity with migrants, "reminding us that their journeys mirror the biblical Exodus, with God as their guide and companion."

"(The pope) emphasizes that every encounter with migrants is an encounter with Christ, urging us to respond with compassion, recognizing their struggles as a reflection of our shared journey toward the Kingdom of Heaven," said Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, according to a Sept. 19 news release.

The USCCB release highlighted the beginning of National Migration Week, observed Sept. 23-29 this year. During the time leading up to World Day of Migrants and Refugees — which takes place on the last Sunday of September — the Catholic Church in the U.S., it said, calls "attention to the challenges confronting migrants and refugees, from their country of origin to their destination, and how Church teaching calls on Catholics to respond with compassionate acts of love."

Catholic dioceses and institutions around the country are set to commemorate this week with events like special Masses, volunteer opportunities and immigration legal clinics, the statement said.

In his message for this year's World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Francis emphasized that "God walks with his people," and he walks within his people, particularly the poor and the marginalized.

"It is possible to see in the migrants of our time, as in those of every age, a living image of God's people on their way to the eternal homeland," the pope wrote in his message. "Their journeys of hope remind us that 'our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil 3:20)."

The pope also said that, like the people of Israel in the time of Moses, "migrants often flee from oppression, abuse, insecurity, discrimination, and lack of opportunities for development." Like the Jewish people in the desert, migrants are tried by obstacles, including thirst, hunger, exhaustion, and the temptation of despair, he said.

Yet, "God not only walks with his people, but also within them," and many migrants entrust themselves to God during their perilous journey seeking safe refuge and consolation amid discouragement, the pope added.

"How many Bibles, copies of the Gospels, prayer books and rosaries accompany migrants on their journeys across deserts, rivers, seas and the borders of every continent!" he exclaimed.

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