



Pope Francis and members of the
Synod standing by the sculpture
“Angels Unaware”

Welcome. Protect. Promote. Integrate.

In the words of Pope Francis:

“Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43). The Lord entrusts to the Church’s motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience — from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will, who are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness, wisdom and foresight, each according to their own abilities.

In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: **to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.**” ([*104th Day of Migrants and Refugees*](#), 2018)

You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.

— Exodus 23:9



I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

—Matthew 25:35

The Gospel Imperative

Our work is guided and driven by Catholic social teaching and the tradition that views migrants and newcomers as human beings created in God's image, our brothers and sisters for whom Jesus gave his life. The Church does not have an immigration policy so much as an "immigrant" policy rooted in the Gospels.

Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.

— Matthew 25:40

Catholic Charities serves migrants and refugees along the border and throughout the U.S. interior by providing for basic humanitarian needs such as food, shelter and clothing; assisting families with social work case management; providing asylum-seekers with immigration legal assistance; and resettling refugees from all corners of the world.

We serve all those in need who come to us — regardless of immigration status or faith — not because they are Catholic, but because we are. **We are a church, and a nation, of immigrants.**

La Frontera

After being processed by federal authorities, they arrive at our sites weary from their travels. They are seeking respite — a warm meal, a hot shower and a safe place to stay for the night. Our agencies on the border are but one stop on a longer journey, from government custody to immigration court, often from poverty and peril to the hope of a permanent home, a job and an education for their children — if permitted to stay.



Warm welcome

Respite center staff and volunteers let migrants who have been processed by immigration authorities know they are now in a safe place where they will be cared for and kept from harm.



Waiting for explanation of services





Food

To eat a hot meal at a table is a luxury many of us don't think twice about. Migrants have been traveling, often covering great distances on foot, with little to sustain them.



Preparing sandwiches
and soup





Waiting patiently for their meal
[120 to 600 people served each day]





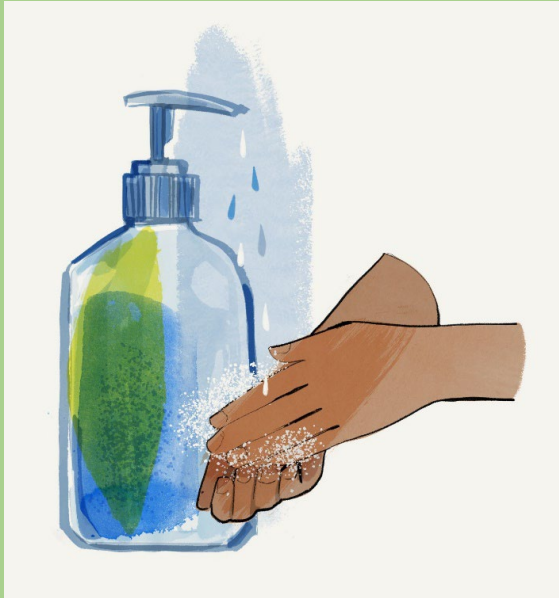
Clothes

Migrants sort through clean, donated clothing to replace the items they've been wearing, often for days or even weeks, with no opportunity to wash soiled garments.

Receiving/sorting
donated clothing



Excitedly selecting
clean clothes



Hygiene

Now migrants can finally wash off the dirt and dust and feel clean again, as well as receive essential hygiene supplies.



Walking into a quiet, clean place to wait for a shower and other services

Washing, drying, folding towels – unending tasks





Medical attention

Even the most minor illness or injury is nearly impossible to treat on the road, and many have been psychologically traumatized. This may be the first care migrants have received in some time from a doctor or social worker.



A place to rest

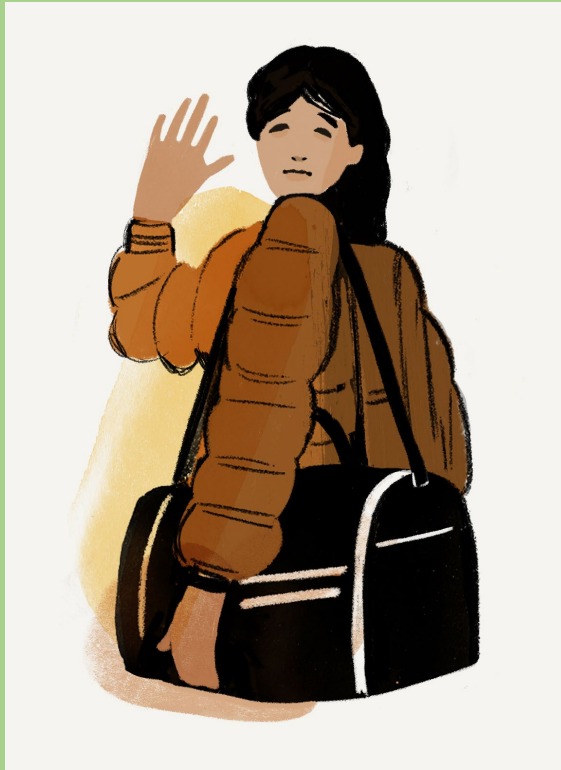
Catholic Charities respite centers provide just that —
respite for exhausted bodies, a place to sleep
without fear.

Walking into a room on campus – beds made fresh each day [mothers and children]



Finding a clean cot and a quiet place [men at one “closed” school building and women at another]





Departure

Staff and volunteers help migrants — who are detained and processed in federal detention before being given a court date and destination city — to make sense of their next steps. We then see them safely off to continue their journeys.



Packing plastic bags with snacks and water for the next leg of the journey -- by bus or plane



Children being children:
whether playing soccer in the dirt, using chalk
on the sidewalks, playing Bingo, hitting pinatas,
coloring a page on which they wrote their name
and country then hung proudly on the wall--
their SMILES and LAUGHTER
needs no translation



When they leave LaFrontera, where
are they going? Will they be
welcomed? Will their dreams and
hopes and plans become real?

Living Matthew 25

Volunteers from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton parish at Fort Cavazos, TX with their chaplain Fr. John [left]



Catholic Charities Staff on call
24-7: ready to drive the bus,
make and serve the meals,
clean the floors, etc., etc.



House of Hospitality for Volunteers

Home of Sisters Joyce Bates and
Roseanna Mellert where volunteers
are welcome to stay -- without charge



Sisters Joyce, Renetta, Roseanna and Donna
Sisters of Notre Dame

A PRAYER FOR CONVERSION

**This is what I want from you –
To do justice, to love compassionately and
To walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8**

**God, we are called to ongoing conversion,
Choosing, again and again,
To be grounded in prophetic hope.
To affirm the steps toward justice,
To participate in the possibility of peace.**

**We are called to see the world
As your ongoing creation,
Where all are part of the whole,
Where all is connected,
Where all is communion,**

**We are called to celebrate
The good that persists, even in darkness,
The light that refuses to be extinguished,
The beauty that can shine through
Even when suffering and pain overwhelm.**

**We are blessed to be called,
We are blessed to struggle.
We are blessed to choose hope, to affirm justice,
To participate in peacemaking**

**We are called to know the good,
To see the light, to celebrate the beauty
Of the Creator's world.**

**We are blessed by the strength of solidarity
As we turn toward connection,
Compassion, and communion. Amen**

Jane Deren, Ph.D.



“Angels Unawares” is a bronze life-size sculpture that depicts a group of migrants and refugees from different cultural and racial backgrounds and from diverse historic periods of time. They stand together, shoulder to shoulder, huddled on a raft. Within this diverse crowd of people, angel wings emerge from the centre, suggesting the presence of the sacred among them. The inspiration behind the work is taken from a biblical passage:

***“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,
for thereby some have entertained angels unaware.”***

Hebrew 13:2

Rio Grande
Laredo Crossing

Looking from the US
side to the Mexican side



Walking across is extremely
dangerous because of the
swift current and the depth
[The warning is passed along
before anyone tries to cross.]



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