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The Gamaliel Foundation in Wisconsin

IMMIGRATION SABBATH RESOURCES

SUGGESTIONS FOR LITURGISTS

SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

For immigrants, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and all newcomers, that they may be welcomed in our parish.

For our immigrant and refugee sisters and brothers, that they may remain true to all that is good in their rich traditions and heritage, and help to build harmonious communities wherever they live.

For religious leaders, that they may continue to lead, guide and support the solicitude of the Church towards immigrants and vulnerable populations.

For immigrants, refugees and exploited vulnerable populations in our community, that they may find hope in our concern for justice and feel the warmth of our love.

For our community, gathered here today to celebrate our unity in Christ, that we may come to a greater understanding and acceptance of our differences.

For unaccompanied migrant children, that they may be protected from all harm and reunited with loving families.

For migrant workers, that they may work in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide.

For an end to the violence and poverty that displace so many of our sisters and brothers from their homes and homelands.

For our leaders, that they may implement policies that allow for safe migration, just working conditions, and an end to the detention of asylum seekers, while protecting our national safety.

SCRIPTURAL SUGGESTIONS

Exodus 23: 9

You must not oppress the stranger;
you know how a stranger feels,
for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19: 32-34

If a stranger lives with you in your land, do not molest
him. You must count him as one of your own countrymen

and love him as yourself—for you were once strangers yourselves in Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.

Tobit 4: 7-8

Set aside part of your goods for almsgiving. Never turn your face from any poor man and God will never turn his from you.

Psalm 82: 2-4

No more mockery of justice,
no more favoring of the wicked!
Let the weak and the orphan have justice,
be fair to the wretched and destitute;
rescue the weak and needy,
save them from the clutches of the wicked!

Psalm 103: 6

Yahweh, who does what is right,
is always on the side of the oppressed.

Proverbs 31: 8-9

Speak, yourself, on behalf of the dumb,
on behalf of all the unwanted;
speak, yourself, pronounce a just verdict,
uphold the rights of the poor, of the needy.

Ecclesiasticus 4: 8-9

To the poor man lend an ear,
and return his greeting courteously.
Save the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor,
and do not be mean-spirited in your judgements.

Isaiah 10: 1-2

Woe to the legislators of infamous laws,
to those who issue tyrannical decrees,
who refuse justice to the unfortunate
and cheat the poor among my people of their rights,
who make widows their prey,
and rob the orphan.

Isaiah 61: 1-2

The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me,
for Yahweh has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh.

Jeremiah 22: 3-4

Yahweh says this: Practise honesty and integrity;
rescue the man who has been wronged from the
hands of his oppressor; do not exploit the stranger,
the orphan, the widow; do no violence,
shed no innocent blood in this place.

Micah 6: 8

What is good has been explained to you;
this is what Yahweh asks of you:
only this, to act justly,
to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7: 8-11

(The word of Yahweh was addressed to Zechariah
as follows:) He said: Apply the law fairly, and practise
kindness and compassion toward each other.
Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the settler

and the poor man, and do not secretly plan evil against one another.

Matthew 25: 35-40

For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me.

. . . I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.

Mark 12: 30-31

This is the first [commandment]...you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

Luke 4: 18-19

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

Galatians 3: 28

. . . there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2: 5-8

In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus:

His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.

Colossians 3: 12-13

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.

1 John 4: 19-21

Anyone who says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love the brother that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never seen. So this is the commandment that he has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother.

BULLETIN BLURBS

In December 2009 the Immigration Policy Center reported Wisconsin was home to 252,150 immigrants in 2007, of which 41.2% (or 103,291 people) were naturalized U.S. citizens who are eligible to vote. Latinos accounted for 4.8% and Asians 1.9% of Wisconsinites in 2007, with

purchasing power of Latinos totaling \$5.3 billion and Asian buying power totaling \$3.0 billion. For the complete report, visit <http://immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-badger-state>.

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Antonio Martinez has lived in the U.S. as a legal permanent resident for 35 years. In 1994 he filed papers to legally bring his wife from Michoacan, Mexico, but sixteen years later, Antonio still waits. Like millions, he hopes and prays for changes in immigration law to reduce the wait for family visas. For current visa wait times, visit:
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html.

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Visa applications submitted in May of 1987 by a legal resident of the U.S. for a brother or sister from the Philippines are just now being processed . . . that's a 23 year wait period! To learn more about visa wait times, visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html.

One need not look further than the life and words of Jesus to understand that people on the move are special in the eyes of God. The New Testament begins with Matthew's story of Joseph and Mary fleeing into Egypt with their newborn son, Jesus. Our Savior Himself lived as a refugee because His own land was not safe.

New legislation for comprehensive immigration reform has been introduced to Congress. Pray that migrants, immigrants and refugees find hope in our concern for justice. To learn more, visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org (or your tradition's resources).

SUGGESTIONS FOR SERMONS

Immigrants who come to the United States, particularly the undocumented, are among the voiceless who need someone to speak on behalf of their human rights and dignity. When the scriptural or liturgical texts address this point, whether on a special occasions or on regular weekends, the sermon can be an effective moment for prophetic instruction and encouragement. The sermon provides an opportune moment to highlight the mandate and tradition of welcome, outreach and service, and to invite others to participate in this calling.

Highlight Scripture, Church tradition, and teachings.

Concern for migrants and refugees has a strong foundation in Scripture. The Hebrew and Christian scriptures poignantly depict Moses and the Jewish people in exile and the Holy Family as refugees. The obstacles to a hearty welcome (fear of the stranger, prejudice, competition, sense of loss) also find counterparts in the parables of Jesus and in His capacity to break through the taboos and restrictions of his contemporaries, especially in regard to tax collectors, sinners, Samaritans, and Gentiles. (See attached for a list of relevant scriptural passages.) These scriptural teachings call us to a deeper compassion for the plight of the migrant. Inspired by this calling of our faith, there is a rich body of teaching and a heritage of concern for immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

The faithful in the United States—a land so blessed and whose tradition is steeped in the immigrant experience—have special responsibility to be a welcoming people. We have an obligation to uphold this tradition.

Highlight social teaching and challenge people's presumptions.

Highlight interesting facts and statistics in your sermon to challenge prejudices and inform people about important demographic changes taking place in our country, including the growing anti-immigrant sentiment and media misinformation. Teach people about what the rich body of social thought says about our Christian responsibility to “welcome the stranger among us.”

A Statement of the Gamaliel Foundation and Religious Leaders

1. We remember

that the biblical tradition reveals God as present in the strangers welcomed by Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18), as the liberator of the Chosen People from their forced sojourn and enslavement in the land of Egypt, and as a God of mercy “who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing” (Deuteronomy 10:18) and who commands the people of God to do the same (Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19);

that Jesus was a refugee in Egypt (Matthew 2) and is encountered in the experience of strangers, refugees, and migrants throughout history (Matthew 25:38);

and that as people of God we are part of a world-wide community, which extends beyond exclusionary borders and which embraces refugees and immigrants.

2. We affirm

that all human beings are created in the image of God and therefore enjoy an innate human dignity with the right to food, shelter, freedom and the opportunity to provide for their own good and the good of society;

that, historically, the United States “has consistently received immigrants, refugees, exiles, and the persecuted from other lands. Fleeing injustice and oppression and seeking liberty and the opportunity to achieve a full life, many have found work, homes, security, liberty, and growth for themselves and their families;”

and that in a world “in which global poverty and persecution are rampant, the presumption is that persons must migrate in order to support and protect themselves and that nations *who are able to receive them should do so whenever possible.*”

3. We condemn

the harshness and inflexibility of many federal immigration laws; the prospect of detention of immigrants remote from legal representation and supportive community; the threat of deportation for minor offenses; the exploitation

of undocumented immigrants, including their labor; the forced separation of immigrant families; and the punitive treatment, violence and death awaiting many immigrants who cross the borders of this nation by land and sea.

4. We call for

faith communities, people of faith and all people of good will to welcome, assist, and befriend immigrants;

faith communities, people of faith and all people of good will to speak out for just and fair treatment of immigrants;

public policy changes which secure civil rights for all immigrants, including:

- a broad legalization of undocumented immigrants who are contributing to the social and economic security of this nation
- full labor protection and labor rights for immigrants
- humane border enforcement policies that, while protecting the security of this nation, emphasize the safety and dignity of immigrants and offer a legal, safe, and orderly alternative for those seeking to cross our borders in order to work
- an end to the inhumane detention and warehousing of asylum seekers who have committed no crime and who have come to this country seeking freedom
- a reform of U.S. family-based legalization categories to encourage family unity in the immigration process
- an end to deportation for minor offenses
- protection of the civil liberties of all people regardless of citizenship.

Materials are adapted from the Catholic Church's Justice for Immigrants Campaign and Sister Josephe Marie Flynn, SSND.

Most mainline religious denominations also provide very fine resources.

For further information: Barbara Pfarr, Wisdom's Immigration Initiative, bpfarr_wisdom@sbcglobal.net