



Deportations, Detention, and COVID-19 August 17, 2020

Dear friends,

We humans are built for community. During this time of social distancing, it's crucial that we remain connected, holding one another in love and support. It's for this reason that **each week during the COVID-19 crisis, we'll be sending you a short resource** to use in a virtual meeting held over the phone or via video conferencing. This weekly resource is a great tool to stay connected with your current and past JFM small groups. It is also a great resource to use individually, or with groups of friends or family to stay connected and engaged in a meaningful way. These reflections will provide a time to pray together, check in with one another, and have conversation around a short passage.

In the meantime, we're offering tips and tools for facilitating all of our current programs through videoconferencing. While we hope that this weekly resource will spiritually sustain your community while in quarantine, [now is also the perfect time to start one of our regular programs](#). If this week's resource interests you, you might consider our brand-new 8-week program called [Faith and Immigration Justice](#). The call to seek justice is just as important now as ever!

Last but not least, generosity is, at its core, a benefit to everyone. When you donate today, your gift helps us sustain individuals committed to making the world better. [Click here to help out](#). Also, please feel free to [forward this resource](#) to friends and family!

Thank you for continuing to care for one another during this time of heightened anxiety. Know that we are praying for you!

Stay well,

The JustFaith Ministries Staff



Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

When everyone has dialed in, begin your time together with these or similar words:

Welcome, friends! It's so good to be with all of you, despite that we can't be together in person. Today we'll begin with prayer and spend a few minutes checking in with each other. Then we'll have some conversation around a short reflection before closing in prayer. Most importantly, though, this will be a time to care for one another and to be the community we're called to be.

Let's take a few seconds of silence to pause, to listen to our breathing, and to be present in this space.

Pause for 30 seconds before beginning the opening meditation.

Begin by saying:

The following meditation was written by Santa Orlando, a member of the Albany, New York chapter of the Maryknoll Affiliates, for JustFaith Ministries' program on immigration.

Reader 1: I want to welcome the stranger
I need help Lord not to see differences but instead to see the face of God
I need help Lord not to judge based on clothes, language or customs
I need help Lord not to walk away pretending I don't see them

Reader 2: I want to welcome the stranger
Help me Lord to delight in the variety and diversity of all people
Help me Lord to see the spark of the divine in their eyes
Help me Lord to take the risk and offer compassion
Help me impart the dignity they deserve as children of God

Reader 3: I want to welcome the stranger
I can't imagine living in a refugee camp or leaving everything in life behind
I can't imagine not having enough food or water
I can't imagine running for my life to escape war or gang conflict
I can't imagine being totally vulnerable
Help me to understand



Reader 4: I want to welcome the stranger
Allow me to meet their glance and offer a smile
Allow me to give a wave or nod of acceptance
Allow me to help them navigate their new life

Reader 5: I want to welcome the stranger
I want them to believe that they can start over
I want them to believe in love not fear
I want to acknowledge their gifts and know more about their lives

Reader 6: I want to welcome the stranger
By doing so I know I will receive more than I give
By doing so I know that I will be connected to the oneness of God

Leader: Infinite source of all, draw us closer to each other and to you- it is only with your help that we may one day truly be in communion together. Amen.

Prayer written for JFM by Santa Orlando,
a member of the Albany, New York,
Chapter of the Maryknoll Affiliates.

Check-In Time (10 minutes or so)

Ask these open-ended questions. If you're by yourself, journal about them.

Note: If you're with a group, these questions have the potential to take up a lot of time. Some weeks may require more check-in time than others, depending on the needs of the group. To provide a shorter yet meaningful check-in time, choose ONE of the questions below, and ask participants to share a ONE sentence response.

- **Before we begin this week's reflection, let's take a few minutes to check in. How is everyone feeling?** (It will be a bit more difficult via phone to know if someone is being talked over or is trying to get a word in.... Be sure everyone has a chance to speak).
- **What is something you're struggling with this week?**
- **Where have you seen a sign of hope this week?**



Other optional questions include: What is something you've learned about yourself during this time of social distancing? Where have you experienced a "thin place" in the last week? Where have you seen beauty this week? What is one new behavior you'd like to continue doing when the virus has passed us by?

Reflection: COVID-19 and Deportations

Play the video "[How Ice Spread the Coronavirus](#)" (9:57). Alternatively, you can send the video out via for participants to watch ahead of time.

Then ask:

- What are your initial reactions to what we just watched?
- How might you connect this story to the teachings of your faith tradition?
- Can you think of any ways to take action in response to what you have learned? (one opportunity for further learning is to watch the new Netflix documentary series called *Immigration Nation*)

Announcements (10 minutes-ish)

- Remind participants that today's conversation offered only a brief insight into a huge topic. If they would like to take a deeper dive into this subject matter, they should consider the eight-week program [Faith and Immigration Justice](#).
- Let participants know that the materials for this gathering were free, put together by the JustFaith Ministries staff in order to equip more people for the work of peace and justice. In order to support the creation of more resources and programs, participants are encouraged to donate to JustFaith Ministries through justfaith.org.
- JustFaith Ministries is currently hosting a monthly webinar series called "Acting for Justice While Sheltering in Place," in which an expert on a justice-related topic will offer tips for taking action during COVID-19. Visit the [JustFaith Ministries Facebook page](#) for more information on times and topics.



- Are there any opportunities for action or advocacy happening in your community this week? Invite participants to share ways to support the work of local groups working for justice.

Closing Prayer (10 minutes-ish)

Then say: Before we join in the closing prayer, let us pause to acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our very breath.

Pause for 30 seconds

Introduce the prayer with these words:

This prayer, which is entitled [“Prayer to the Immigrant and Refugee,”](#) was shared by the United Methodists of Greater New Jersey as part of their 2017 Statement on Immigration.

Prayer to the Immigrant and Refugee

Reader 1: O One who hears the cries of your people in bondage;
The One who feels the terrors of the oppressed;
You sent your beloved children out to seek freedom as refugees.
The nations through which they traveled were full of fear.
Those nations lost your favor when they showed no compassion
and closed their borders to Your people in need.
You would not let their holy prophets speak a curse upon them only blessings,
causing rulers to rage.
We join our prayers with Yours most Compassionate and Merciful
for immigrants and refugees seeking a land of promise and peace.

Reader 2: Jesus, Refugee and Immigrant, hear our prayers for those like You:
For the children who cling tightly to their mothers for safety;
For the children who see the fear and determination in their father’s eyes as
they seek for safety;
For the parents who watch their children suffer, hungry and cold.
You found a refuge where you could stay until the threat ended,
grant these others the same mercy from us.
Forgive our fears.
Forgive our prejudices.



Forgive the hardness of our hearts.
Show us how to repent.
Keep us from sharing in the fate of the rich young ruler,
when we turn slowly away from You, our richest blessing.
Refugee and Immigrant God, who came wanting to dwell among us,
hear our prayers. Amen.

– United Methodists of Greater New Jersey

Then, in these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern, or a request to briefly share it:

We are disciples on a journey.

We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.

We hold one another as we carry the concerns of our neighbors.

If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.

Leader: We pray also for the members of the JustFaith community across the country.
Unite us through the power of your Holy Spirit, that together we might
participate with you in the building of your Kingdom, in order to create a more
just and peaceful world. Amen.