Opinion
Guest Voices



A Central American migrant who was deported by U.S. and Mexican officials reads the Bible at a shelter in El Ceibo, Guatemala, on Aug. 15, 2021. (CNS/Reuters/Luis Echeverria)



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In many ways, the Bible is a migrant's book — written by, for and about those who cross borders in search of safety, provision or promise. Abraham left his homeland, never fully settling. Ruth followed Naomi into a foreign land, with no certainty of welcome. Hagar wandered the wilderness, desperate for water, desperate for survival. Joseph, sold into slavery, would rise in a land not his own. And Jesus — Jesus, whose family fled persecution, knew the precarity of displacement, the vulnerability of exile. The story of God's people is, at its core, a story of movement, of refuge, of longing for home.

And yet, migration in these sacred stories is not merely survival — it is grace. It is the means by which God moves, reshapes and restores. Theologian Robert Chao Romero speaks of "migration as grace," the idea that movement itself is a conduit of God's unmerited favor. That in the crossing of borders, both the migrant and the land that receives them are drawn into a sacred exchange of blessing. This grace is not one-directional. It is mutual, a divine reciprocity.

People migrate for many reasons — poverty, war, persecution or climate disaster. But beneath all these is a single truth: Migration is never easy. It is not a first choice, but often a last resort. It is a mother risking the open sea because the land has become a grave. It is a father stepping into the unknown, not for himself but for the child on his back. And yet, instead of seeing their courage, many in power see only a threat. They wield mistruths about those who arrive, not realizing that to fear the immigrant is to deny the richness of what they bring.



Central American migrants, moving in a caravan through Juchitan, Mexico, are pictured in a file photo on a train during their journey toward the United States. (OSV News photo/Reuters/Jose de Jesus Cortes)

Because migration is not just movement — it is exchange. Those who leave their homelands often send back more than memory; they send billions in remittances, sustaining families, communities and entire economies. In the U.S., immigrants contribute far beyond what they take, paying into tax systems, bolstering social security, and filling labor shortages that would otherwise fracture industries. But the impact of migration is not just economic. It is cultural, spiritual. It is a sharing of stories, traditions, a theology of survival and resilience. Immigrants remind us that the church is not bound by borders but by the hospitality of God. In them, we do not find mere laborers or taxpayers — we find teachers, healers, entrepreneurs and prophets.

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On Feb. 11, Pope Francis issued a poignant letter to U.S. bishops with grief in his pen, urging a nation to rediscover its own soul. He spoke of mass deportations that have torn apart families, of lives discarded like refuse. His words were clear: No policy can stand if it does not uphold human dignity. No law is just if it turns its back on the vulnerable. These are not abstractions. They are flesh and bone. They are mothers and fathers, children and elders, seeking what any of us would seek in the face of danger — life.

Perhaps, in a nation preoccupied with what it stands to lose, we might consider all we stand to gain. To welcome the stranger is to be changed by them.



Cuban migrant Marielis Arosh and her family walk with other migrants after their CBP One app asylum appointment was canceled on the day of U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration, near the border fence Jan. 20 in Mexicali, Mexico. (OSV News/Reuters/Victor Medina)

Scripture affirms this — refusing to render the sojourner invisible. The law of God is clear: the foreigner is to be treated as one of our own (Leviticus 19:33-34). The prophets speak with urgency — do not oppress, do not exploit, do not turn away (Jeremiah 22:3). These are not suggestions but sacred imperatives. To honor the immigrant is not simply charity; it is the recognition of divine image-bearing. It is to see as God sees — to call them beloved.

Jesus made this plain. He declared that to welcome the stranger is to welcome him. To care for the imprisoned, the sick, the hungry — is to care for him. There is no distinction between our love for Christ and our love for those the world has cast aside. A faith that does not kneel to meet the needs of the suffering, has forgotten the one it claims to follow. The way of Jesus was not one of exclusion, but of invitation. He moved beyond the barriers of culture and religion, for the sake of love. Like him, we too must take up this practice of radical hospitality. It is not optional. It is the very measure of our faithfulness.

The church cannot be silent. We who claim to love Jesus must remember that he, too, was once a child carried across borders by parents desperate to protect him from the violence of an empire. The holy one, a refugee. If we are to follow him, we must — as Pope Francis has urged us — refuse the narratives that discriminate and cause suffering to our migrant siblings. We must protect and defend them. We must not turn away.

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