

IGNATIAN EXAMEN ON MIGRATION



The Movements of the Examen

1. I give thanks to God for creation and for being wonderfully made.
2. I ask God for the grace to see human migration and all of creation as God does – in all its splendor and in its sufferings.
3. I ask for the grace of conversion towards justice and reconciliation.
4. I ask for the grace to reconcile my relationship with God, creation, and humanity, and to stand in solidarity through my actions.
5. I offer a closing prayer for the vulnerable in our society.

Begin the Examen

Begin by placing yourself in a posture and space that allows you to grow aware and present—to be open to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

There are five steps to the Ignatian Examen on Migration. Each step includes a reflection, intended to be used like you might a guided meditation. Each reflection is followed by questions for further consideration.

If you are working individually, take your time with both the reflection and questions. Go at a pace that works for you, and allow for pauses to reflect more on sections that stand out to you. This is the Spirit at work.

If you are in a group, consider discussing what emerged in your personal Examen after each step utilizing the questions as a touch point for your conversation.

This Examen was written for use by a wide range of individuals compelled to take action on migration issues—those who have migrated themselves, those unsure about where they stand on immigration, and those who identify as allies and advocates—including family members, classmates, friends, fellow parishioners, colleagues, neighbors, and community members. Language in this prayer experience is open to interpretation. Please utilize these reflections in any way that speaks to your own authentic, unique experiences.

STEP ONE: GRATITUDE

I give thanks to God for creation and for being wonderfully made.



I give thanks to God for the creation stories of all global citizens as we continue to give lift, flight, air, height, and landing to our identities, dreams, and vocations of faith and personhood. We are boundless in our desires to explore how we are wonderfully made in the likeness of God. We are affirmed by God's unconditional embrace of our personhood as dreamers, migrants, refugees, citizens, and seekers of citizenship even in the violent face of separation of families, border militarization, cruel and inhumane detention practices, and policies that lead people to make choices out of desperation.

We are created in the image of God—each of us. But, sometimes we forget the divine indwelling that lives and breathes in each of us—we lose sight of our common humanity. Collectively, we may not see the value of how as global citizens, in the domain of God, our murmurations create strength to rise, freedom to move, ability to collaborate, and space to embrace our unique and individual identities.

Each one of us has a migration story. For those of us whose migration stories have faded from our family's history, or who have achieved economic security and prosperity, we can easily forget that each person, regardless of their race, religion, or geo-political upbringing, is indeed a gift, laden with dignity, value, and transformative abilities. Birds are creatures of the air, would we ever bound them by name and geography?

For reflection and discussion:

- What is my migration story? How have I crossed boundaries and borders in my own life?
- Is there someone who puts a face on migration for me?
- Am I self-serving in my actions to discover someone like 'me,' as opposed to being motivated by the new discoveries that the creation story of migration holds for each of us?
- In a spirit of gratitude, reflect on the gifts that immigrants and refugees bring to our communities.

STEP TWO: AWARENESS

I ask God for the grace to see human migration and all of creation as God does—in all its splendor and in its sufferings.



All of creation was created with movement. Birds migrate each year to find food, safe places to raise their young, and places to survive the brutal weather. Birds are not bound by lines on maps, but rather fly across country boundaries with ease.

Humans throughout history have migrated as well. Migration is a part of many creation stories. While believing that sovereign nations have a right to control their borders, the Catholic faith teaches that people have the right to thrive in their homeland, and, when forces prevent that, they have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families. Our faith goes on to teach that refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection, and that the human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

In this time of climate catastrophe, migration patterns of birds, humans, and other creatures are rapidly shifting. Drought, famine, contamination of land and water, exploitation of natural resources, and 'natural' disasters leave millions displaced throughout the world today. Furthermore, U.S. foreign policy has created political climates in which people flee for their very lives—particularly from Central America and Mexico. Our faith traditions call us to welcome the newest neighbor in our midst, yet millions of people are huddled just outside, locked out.

For reflection and discussion:

- Growing up, what did I learn about migration—from personal experience, friends, family, television, books, faith leaders, teachers, or mentors? How does this affect my current view of migration, and of those who migrate? Am I challenged by biases or negativity from my past?
- What position does my own faith tradition take on immigration?
- Do I find that any aspects of Catholic teaching on migration are challenging? Why?

STEP THREE: UNDERSTANDING

I ask for the grace of conversion towards justice and reconciliation.



I pray to be moved to action by the feelings God has stirred in my heart and in my gut. May I bring God's love to our hurting world. I invite God's healing presence in our world and in my own life and discernment.

We recall the words of the United States and Mexican Bishops in their 2003 pastoral letter on migration: "America is a continent born of immigrant peoples who came to inhabit these lands . . . Throughout history the continent has suffered through the expansion of other peoples who came to conquer and colonize these lands, displacing and eliminating entire peoples and even forcing unknown millions of persons and families from Africa to come as slaves."

Throughout our history, and today, people have been systematically excluded and marginalized in law, practice, and word. Justice and reconciliation means acknowledging the harm that our communities have perpetrated and experienced, and working to build a society that upholds the dignity of all individuals.

Pope Francis invites us "not just to see but to look. Not just to hear but to listen. Not just to meet and pass by, but to stop . . . allow ourselves to be moved" by our migrant family. Immigration is about real people who are trying to find a better life and a new beginning. It's about more than statistics, it's about families and the sacredness of individual, unique lives. As Pope Francis stated, "Each migrant has a name, a face and a story." We are invited to be part of a culture of encounter as we welcome, protect, integrate, and promote immigrants and refugees in our local and global communities as neighbors, friends, peers, classmates, advocates. We all approach this issue in our country with different backgrounds and motivations, but we are bound by our common belief in the dignity of all people.

For reflection and discussion:

- How can I personally work to build a "culture of encounter" in my own life, community, region, and/or country?

- [illegible]



May grace grant me confidence to stand in solidarity through the entirety of my actions so I may support the whole person that migration impacts. Migration—making the perilous flight to other lands—requires courage, fortitude, and a sense of self-surrendering. Borders might be walled and dreams may not be actualized because of antiquated policies, complacency towards ‘other’, and discomfort and fear that ‘I’ cannot find God in my neighbor.

The complexity of migration and how it impacts people places a responsibility on oneself to become informed and to serve those who are marginalized. Grace moves me past my own borders and invites me to larger fields, ripe with the ability to act, serve, learn, embrace, and love.

Scripture speaks repeatedly of the migration experience, from Abraham who was sent out from his homeland in the Old Testament, to the Holy Family who fled Herod and lived their lives for a time as refugees in a foreign land. But, can we now gather the courage to publicly ask and decry why is this happening? Our moral tradition calls on all people of faith and goodwill to stand in support of life and human dignity.

Can I recall a time of desperation when my plight and need were addressed with kindness, compassion, and fierce resolve from others who embraced me? My faith has changed me through the indwelling of God in others. I ask God to dwell in me in the same way—to allow me, in my unique way, to see persecution and oppression and to respond in way that says: “My kin they are; their plight I embrace as my own. I must act.”

For reflection and discussion:

- What keeps me from gathering the courage to publicly speak out or take action on behalf of those pushed to the peripheries of power by an inhumane immigration system?
- When have I found myself in need—in peril or desperation—and met with kindness, compassion, and refuge? How can I use this experience to offer the same to others?
- Pedro Arrupe, S.J., former leader of the Jesuits, once said that working for justice requires, "an attitude not simply of refusal but of counterattack against injustice; a decision to work with others toward the dismantling of unjust social structures so that the weak, the oppressed, the marginalized of this world may be set free." What unjust structures do I feel called to dismantle?

STEP FIVE: PRAYER

I offer a closing prayer for the vulnerable in our society.

Lord of All,

Some of us make our homes on hills,
others in valleys.
Some in tall buildings, some on
shorelines, some at risk on the street.
And we divide up our patches with
lines we scratch into the ground
and call them borders.

Where the lines don't suffice, we build
fences. Where fences fail, we dig
moats. Where moats aren't enough,
we erect walls.

But what if we were to look across
these borders? Across fence, moat,
and wall and see you on the other
side?

Lord, teach us to reach across all
borders, fabricated or natural,

to join with all our
brothers and sisters
to unify, and not separate.
To honor all who wander
seeking hope, seeking opportunity—
seeking you
as assuredly as we seek you.

Lord, let no border ring our hearts.
May we find a place
within them for all.
Turn our hands from building walls
toward building justice.
Stretch our arms across fence, wall
and moat

To seek out those on the other side
that we might find you in each other's
eyes
in each other's hands
in each other's wounds.



Amen

[To Reach Across Borders - Catholic
Relief Services]