



For Immediate Release  
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## **Catholics called to pray for refugees at annual Migration Mass**

*Bishop Gerald Barnes will be joined by Cardinal Roger Mahony along with three brother bishops at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Diocesan Migration Mass in the desert city of Coachella.*

COACHELLA – The nation’s sixth largest Roman Catholic diocese will show its solidarity with the estimated 60 million refugees around the world at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Diocesan Migration Mass on January 10 at Our Lady of Soledad Church in Coachella.

The Migration Mass falls during National Migration Week, celebrated by the Catholic Church in the United States each January. The theme of the national campaign this year is “A stranger, and you welcomed me,” taken from Jesus’ definition of discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew (25).

Bishop Gerald Barnes will be the principal celebrant of the Mass. Auxiliary Bishop Rutilio del Riego will concelebrate along with Cardinal Roger Mahony, Auxiliary Bishop David G. O’Connell and Auxiliary Bishop Alexander Salazar, all from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The Diocesan Mass highlights the historical and spiritual importance of migration in human history and serves as a showcase for the cultural diversity present in the Diocese.

This year, as millions of refugees flee violence and destitution in places like Syria and Central America, the Mass will focus on the biblical call to “welcome the stranger” in that context. The refugee theme will be represented in several ways during the Mass.

Families from Vietnam, Mexico and Central America who sought refuge in the United States will be part of the opening procession, carrying posters that depict their journey.

During the presentation of the gifts, symbols of the migration journey will be presented at the altar, including a chalice made of wood from a boat that attempted to carry refugees from Libya to the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2013. More than 360 refugees died when the boat shipwrecked. Cardinal Mahony, who has devoted much of his ministry in retirement to immigration reform, provided the wooden chalice for the Mass.

Prayers of the faithful will be offered in multiple languages, petitioning God to protect refugees on their journey.

Finally, a Vietnamese refugee, a Syrian refugee and a Guatemalan refugee will offer testimony at the close of the Mass.

"People often forget that the Holy Family themselves were refugees fleeing into Egypt," said Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, auxiliary bishop of Seattle and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration. "Likewise, refugees around the world, all of whom are extremely vulnerable, are fleeing for their lives. As Catholics, we are called to welcome and support these families who also need our help."

The Bishops of the United States have called on the federal government to allocate 100,000 annual resettlement slots for the most vulnerable refugees fleeing violence in Syria, and an additional 100,000 slots for refugees in other parts of the world.

The Migration Mass begins at 1 p.m. It will be held outdoors on church property (weather permitting) to accommodate an expected large crowd. Our Lady of Soledad Church is located at 52-525 Oasis Palm Ave. Coachella, CA 92236.

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