

Our Lady of the Way



As St. Ignatius worked to establish the Society of Jesus, he would pray before a late medieval mural of Mary, which was originally on an external wall of the small chapel of Santa Maria della Strada (Our Lady of the Way) in Rome.

Throughout his life, Ignatius had a particular devotion to Mary and he placed the Society of Jesus under her patronage.

In 1568, when the small chapel of Santa Maria della Strada was to be demolished to make way for the Church of the Gesù, the first Jesuit church in Rome, Ignatius left specific instructions that the image of the Madonna della Strada was to be preserved.

Consecrated in 1584, the Church of the Gesù still holds the Madonna della Strada in the north chapel where she is venerated by pilgrims daily.

Today, Our Lady of the Way is invoked by those seeking asylum or who must undertake dangerous journeys.

On May 24th each year, we invoke her protection for our brothers and sisters who are forced to move due to violence, persecution, or natural disasters.



How much contempt is stirred up at times toward the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!

On this day, I would like all of us to hope anew and to revive our trust in others, including those who are different than ourselves, or who come from distant lands, bringing unfamiliar customs, ways of life, and ideas!

For all of us are children of God!

- The final message of Pope Francis, "Urbi et Orbi,"
Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

About JRS

Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is a Catholic organisation that accompanies, serves, and advocates for refugees and other forcibly displaced people so they can heal, learn, and determine their own future.

JRS operates in 58 countries, carrying out education, economic inclusion, mental health and psychosocial support, and reconciliation programmes in refugee camps, detention centers, and urban areas. We advocate for refugee rights and call for protection of the most vulnerable.

Catholic Social Teaching (CTS) on Refugees

Modern CST began with Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and interprets social issues in light of the Gospel. Five core CST themes are especially relevant to refugees and forced migration.

1. The Right to Migrate — or Stay

Popes Francis, Benedict XVI, John Paul II, and their predecessors have consistently affirmed that every person has the right to remain in their homeland or migrate — a principle rooted in human dignity and freedom. CST identifies the state as a “privileged agent” of the common good. When it fails — due to poverty, injustice, or violations of human dignity — people have the right to leave and pursue conditions consistent with that inherent dignity, even when doing so is costly or perilous.

2. The Right to Safe and Legal Migration

The number of forcibly displaced people globally grew to 123 million in 2024. CST teaches that these individuals must be allowed to migrate safely and legally rather than risk their lives through dangerous journeys or risk exploitation. While states have the right to manage their borders, CST affirms that decisions to migrate should remain with those most directly affected. Migrants themselves are in the best position to determine whether to remain or move — an expression of their autonomy & human rights.

3. The Responsibility to Welcome and Integrate

Once displaced, people have the right to rebuild their lives in safety. CST calls on governments and communities to provide permanent homes and opportunities for integration. Pope Francis often spoke of a shared global responsibility to “welcome, protect, promote, and integrate” migrants and refugees.

4. Migration as a Providential Opportunity

Rather than seeing migrants as threats, the Church views migration as a “providential opportunity” to fulfill God’s vision for unity. As John 11:52 reminds us, migration helps unify the “dispersed children of God.” It becomes a sign of communion and solidarity across humanity.

5. Migration as an Act of Hope

Migration is ultimately an act of hope—a belief in the possibility of a better life. Jesus placed the poor at the center of His kingdom (Luke 6:20), and entrusted His followers with bringing hope to the vulnerable.

Migrants in Scripture

Hebrews 13:2 – “Some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

Ruth – A foreigner and widow who became part of the messianic line.

Luke 10 – The Good Samaritan: a “despised” outsider who embodied mercy.

Matthew 25 – Jesus teaches that how we treat the stranger is how we treat Him.