



FOR THE RIGHT TO AN
EDUCATION

JANUARY

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refugees and those
affected by war, that their
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is necessary to build a
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to an education

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THE POPE VIDEO
Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network



PRAYER INTENTION REFLECTION

Today we're experiencing an "educational catastrophe." This is no exaggeration. Due to wars, migration, and poverty, some 250 million boys and girls lack education. All children and youth have the right to go to school, regardless of their immigration status. Education is a hope for everyone – it can save migrants and refugees from discrimination, criminal networks, and exploitation.... So many minors are exploited! It can help them integrate into the communities who host them. Education opens the doors to a better future. In this way, migrants and refugees can contribute to society, either in their new country or in their country of origin, should they decide to return. And let's never forget that whoever welcomes the foreigner, welcomes Jesus Christ.

Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a more human world, might always be respected.

Pope Francis: Today we're experiencing an educational catastrophe

In his prayer intention for the month of January, the Pope underlines that some 250 million children worldwide are not attending school. Migration and displacement due to war and poverty are the main causes of this phenomenon. The Pope invites us to pray "for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected."

(Vatican City, 2 January 2025). – In his prayer intention for the month of January, Pope Francis defends the right to an education for those children and young people who, due to migration and displacement caused by war and poverty, lack whatever type of education. His video message, produced by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network in collaboration with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), illustrates this by speaking of an authentic "educational catastrophe" that has left some 250 million boys and girls without schooling.



Education for everyone, regardless of immigration status

In fact, the educational process for children and young people who migrate or are displaced due to war is interrupted due to the need to flee their homeland. In many cases, schools in conflict zones or refugee camps have limited access to educational material, adequate infrastructure, and trained teachers.

Furthermore, when children and young people move to other countries or regions, their migration status can prevent them from accessing education, and consequently, from having a better future. This is why Pope Francis affirms in the video that “all children and youth have the right to go to school, regardless of their immigration status.” On previous occasions, the Pope has asked that they have “regular access to primary and secondary education,” and at the same time that “when they come of age they be guaranteed the right to remain and to enjoy the possibility of continuing their studies.”

The Church on the front lines

The protagonists in the images accompanying Pope Francis's words are precisely boys and girls escaping conflict or poverty. The Pope Video for this month testifies to the Church's commitment on the front lines to guarantee their education in the most complex contexts. There are images of educational centers established by the AVSI Foundation for refugee children – the majority from Syria – in Jordan and Lebanon; Salesian schools in Palabek, Uganda, where 60% of the South Sudanese migrants are under 13 years old; the Madre Asunta Institute in Tijuana on the border between Mexico and the United States, constructed by the Scalabrinian family and attended by children from various Latin American countries, the dedication of the JRS, present on various continents, is depicted through their presence in eastern Chad, alongside entire generations born and raised in refugee camps; volunteers of the Pope John XXIII Association who accompany the studies of children who arrive in Greece and Italy on their migratory journey; the efforts of international organizations such as UNICEF, which is also present through educational projects in numerous host countries where children escaping the war in Ukraine have been able to attend language classes in the last few years.

Due its long-standing commitment to ensuring that those forced to flee their homes and communities are not deprived of their right to education and their path to a hopeful and just future, the JRS was a strategic partner in producing the English version of this video. “We are grateful to join Pope Francis in inviting people all over the world to pray that education aspirations remain at the heart of the life journey of migrants, refugees and all displaced persons” said Br. Michael Schöpf SJ, JRS International Director. “In all our projects worldwide, we witness how education offers refugees access to security, hope, and economic opportunities. It protects their sense of self, fosters agency, and promotes their integral development.”

The Pope's concern for migrants and refugees

Pope Francis's intention for the month of January reflects one of the main themes of his pontificate: his concern for migrants and refugees based on Jesus's words “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” in the Gospel of Matthew (25:35). Thus, Pope Francis reminds us in his video message, “let's never forget that whoever welcomes the foreigner, welcomes Jesus.”

In the past, the Holy Father has dedicated various prayer intentions to the migrant and refugee crisis, one of the major challenges of our times. The most recent was that of last June of 2024 when he asked that we pray that “migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys fraught with danger and violence, may find welcome and new living opportunities in their host countries.”

Father Cristóbal Fones, S.J., International Director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, recalls that “Pope Francis has on a number of occasions affirmed the need to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and refugees. These are attitudes of everyday life that everyone can and must cultivate. During this month, we want to help discover and develop them in our concrete contexts. The Pope tells us that every stranger who knocks at our door presents the possibility of encountering Jesus Christ who identifies himself in the Gospel with the stranger who is welcomed or rejected at any point in history.”

“In the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee which we are celebrating, the Pope also asks that not only the safety and access to work, but also the education of migrants and refugees be guaranteed,” Father Fones continues. “It is good to remember that in connection with the Jubilee, one of the conditions necessary to obtain the indulgences granted on the occasion of this Holy Year is precisely to pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, which are very concrete. And during this month, it focuses on respect for this basic right of people who are very vulnerable.”