

## MADONNA DELLA STRADA Prayer Service

On May 24, we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Way, an invocation of Our Lady that allows us to remember the entire Ignatian family and all people who are on the move.

Like St. Ignatius first, and Father Arrupe later, we want to pray to this Virgin to place with her Son all our brothers and sisters who are displaced from their homes due to violence, persecution, or natural disasters.

***JOIN IN PRAYER WITH JRS AS PART OF THE  
IGNATIAN FAMILY ASKING OUR LADY OF THE  
WAY TO KEEP UNDER HER MANTLE ALL OUR  
BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO HAVE BEEN  
FORCED TO FLEE.***



### OUR LADY OF THE WAY

As St. Ignatius worked to establish the Society of Jesus, he would pray before the 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.

Ignatius would have known the image well and, throughout his life, had a particular devotion to Our Lady under whose patronage he placed the Society of Jesus. The small chapel of Madonna della Strada was demolished to make way for the Church of the Gesù, the first Jesuit church in Rome, which was begun in 1568 and consecrated in 1584.

Ignatius left specific instructions that the image of Our Lady of the Way was to be preserved in the new church and today it is venerated in the north chapel of the Gesù.

To celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of the Way, we invite you to take part in a prayer service during which we will remember the journey undertaken by those forced to move.

At each stage of the journey we will be able to listen to a brief testimony and light a candle as we join in prayer with the entire community.

## STAGE 1

We begin this journey alongside those who are suffering from war, hunger, inequality, natural disasters, human rights violations, or persecution. By 2024, UNHCR estimates that 130 million people will be forcibly displaced.



[Listen to Mauricio's story.](#)

**Our Lady of the Way , we light this candle for those who find themselves in situations of uncertainty, pain, suffering and fear and are being forced to leave their lives behind in order to save them. That they may find the courage and strength to begin to stop being afraid.**

**Hail Mary...**

## STAGE 2

The routes that people on the move must choose are not always safe. On foot, by boat or train, they put their lives and those of their families at risk on their way to a second chance. The number of people who have lost their lives on different migration routes has increased by 20% in the last year, according to the International Organization for Migration.



[Listen to Iftu's story.](#)

**Our Lady of the Way, we light this candle for those who are on the road at this moment through the sea, the jungle, or the desert. So that the people on the road do not faint and find hands to support and accompany them and for those who could not make it.**

**Hail Mary...**

## STAGE 3

Often people who have been forcibly displaced find themselves living in shelters, refugee camps and urban areas for months or even years before they are able to return to their places of origin, reach their final destination or be resettled. In 2022, JRS served 1.5 million people through its programs in 58 countries.



[Listen to Safia's story](#)

**Our Lady of the Way, we light this candle for all people who live in displacement waiting to start their new life. That they may feel safe and not lose hope that they can begin to heal and build their own future.**

**Hail Mary...**

## STAGE 4

Refugees, asylum seekers or forced migrants must start from scratch upon arrival at their destinations, more than 75% live in low- and middle-income nations according to UNHCR. Upon arrival they must regularize their status, find work and housing. Inserting themselves into communities with their norms and cultures to get used to, dealing with grief and feelings of loneliness, getting used to unfamiliar spaces and faces that will take time to become friendly.



[Listen to Ali's story](#)

**Our Lady of the Way, we light this candle for those who are already starting over in new regions or countries. That they may find the strength and tenacity to face this new stage full of challenges and that as they cement their new life, they may feel the welcome of their new neighbors.**

**Hail Mary...**

Finally, let us pray for all of us who wish to serve, accompany, and defend forcibly displaced persons.

**Our Lady of the Way and Mother of Light**

Illuminate the paths that lead to spaces of encounter, so that we do not hesitate to look migrants and refugees in the eye, to listen to their stories and to **ACCOMPANY** them as they begin their new life as displaced persons.

**Our Lady of the Way and Mother of Tenderness**

Help us to always choose what most leads us to love and **SERVE** those people who have been forced to move, who are usually in vulnerable situations and are forgotten by our society.

**Our Lady of the Way and Mother of Wisdom**

Help us to recognize the injustices in immigration policies and to be courageous in raising our voices to **ADVOCATE** for the rights of people seeking refuge and protection.

**Our Lady of the Way and Mother of All**

Place us with your Son as we stand with refugees.

Amen

Migrants and refugees are men and women who one day felt that they could not go on with their daily lives because of outside forces. Men and women who had a job, a family, a community... people like you and me who are just looking for a place to be safe and start over.

