

**TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2017**

Bishop Walkowiak, along with the staff of the Diocese of Grand Rapids and Catholic Charities West Michigan (CCWM), is encouraging parishes to participate in a global campaign called "Share the Journey". It was launched by Pope Francis on September 27 and will continue through September 2019.

The global campaign's focus is to raise awareness and show support for immigrants and refugees. The Catholic Church is hoping that this campaign will inspire our parishes, schools, and communities to build bridges and relationships with immigrants and refugees. Our brothers & sisters often make perilous journeys because they are forced to flee their homes to escape conflict, poverty, persecution and violence. But throughout the world, in Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central America, and right here in the United States, there are millions of people who have fled their homes, their countries, their whole way of life—to find safety from violence. For them, violence is not a biblical story from the past. It is an ever-present reality, overwhelming their lives. They flee for all sorts of reasons: to get away from civil wars, to avoid having their daughters seized for the sex trade and their sons taken to serve as laborers or soldiers in tribal armies. They flee multi-year droughts that leave them without food and hope for their families. They flee ethnic and religious oppression. They flee to find work to support their families. They flee environmental disasters and lawlessness. Often their children have not been to school for years. They are exposed to brutality daily. They long to return to their homes. But until these are safe places, they know they need to go elsewhere. Whether they have fled to another part of their own country or to another country altogether, they are at the mercy of strangers, who probably speak a different language. They live with fear in their hearts. Who will take them in? How will they be received, if they do find a new home?

Our faith calls us to love our neighbor, to see Christ in those who are in greatest need, and to welcome newcomers seeking the security, peace, and opportunity they cannot find in their home countries. There are many opportunities for us to respond to Christ's call to love our neighbor and share the journey of immigrants and refugees in our country and around the world. We can support efforts to provide food and shelter in the camps around the world where they have taken refuge. We can join local efforts to support people here in our community or nearby. And pray. Never forget the power of prayer. Pray for a change of hearts and minds that would reject or ignore our refugees. Pray for those who have fled their homes and especially for the children that they may find peace and safety.

God bless you!