

SYMBOLS OF SOLIDARITY

The Symbols of Solidarity is an optional activity designed to visually illustrate the theme of the 2019 Share Lent campaign. The symbols can be used in a procession before or during Mass or during an activity organized in your community. If you plan on presenting the Symbols of Solidarity during Mass, please coordinate with the parish pastoral team as to how the presentation will unfold. Schools are also invited to present these symbols in the most appropriate area in their school.

Organization and execution

The Symbols of Solidarity presentation generally takes less than 10 minutes but can be shortened or lengthened as needed. Here are some suggestions that will help you to present the symbols.

Location

Determine in advance where the symbols will be placed after the procession. You could, for example, place them near the altar on a decorated table or in another location set aside for this purpose.

Presenter

Designate in advance a person who will present the symbols. You could call on a different person to present each symbol.

Presentation

The Symbols of Solidarity can be done at different moments (before, after or as part of Mass), depending on what is most appropriate for your parish. Begin the presentation with a procession that is led by the people holding the symbols.

Once the procession is complete and people are seated, the person presenting the symbols may begin.

When a symbol is presented, the person holding it presents it to the congregation. Once the symbol is presented, he or she places it down in the designated location and then steps aside to make way for the presentation of the next symbol. When the symbols have all been presented, the people return to their places.

Text for the presentation of the Symbols of Solidarity

Lent is a sacred period, a time for preparation, transformation, and conversion, offering us the opportunity to deepen and enrich our faith. It is also a privileged moment of encounter with oneself, our loved ones, newcomers of our community, and with God.

In this age when division seems to be at the forefront, when fear clouds minds, and the culture of indifference stifles hearts, Pope Francis invites us to promote a culture of encounter and to share the journey with the millions of people around the world who are forced to flee their homes. It is an invitation to all of us to walk together side by side on the path of solidarity.

Development and Peace – Caritas Canada partners in the Global South stand side by side with people forced to flee their homes, whether by working to make their voices heard, providing emergency assistance to displaced communities and host communities, or fighting against the root causes of forced migration.

The Symbols of Solidarity that we present to you today reflect the path traveled by displaced persons and the work done by Development and Peace partners.

Symbols

- A pair of old shoes to symbolize the road traveled by forced migrants.
- A backpack to symbolize the precarious situation of forced migrants.
- A lifejacket to symbolize the dangers and difficulties faced by forced migrants during their journey.
- A dish to be shared (hummus with crackers or a fruit platter for example) to symbolize the culture of encounter and the connections between forced migrants and members of their host community.

1st symbol: A pair of old shoes

This pair of shoes symbolizes the path travelled by forced migrants. In 2017, 68.5 million of our sisters and brothers were forced to flee their homes because they feared for their lives and their safety. They set out on a long and difficult journey, sometimes risking their lives, in the hope of living in dignity and peace.

In Colombia, slightly more than 7.7 million people have been displaced because of conflict, violence, natural disasters, and development projects, resulting in this country having the most internally displaced people in the world. The National Agrarian Coordination, a Development and Peace partner, works with Indigenous women, many of whom have been forcibly displaced. They are taught new skills to engage in dialogue with local, regional, and national authorities. By promoting inclusive and participatory democracies, we tackle one of the root causes of forced migration.

2nd symbol: A backpack

This backpack symbolizes the precarious situation of forced migrants. When they flee their homes, they must leave everything behind. Stripped of their belongings and their dignity, they leave in search of a safe place to live.

On October 30, 1990, the Nigerian police force sent members of its elite combat unit to the community of Umuechem. The community was demonstrating peacefully to claim its share of the profits generated by Shell after 30 years of oil exploitation on their lands. More than 300 people from the community were killed in two days and their houses were set on fire. Following these traumatic events, almost all survivors fled to neighbouring villages. In 2014, the community of Umuechem and Social Action, a Development and Peace partner in Nigeria, decided to seek reparations by taking Shell to court in the Netherlands to fight against impunity.

3rd symbol: A lifejacket

This lifejacket symbolizes the many dangers and difficulties faced by forced migrants during their travels: extortion, police roadblocks, hunger, fear, loneliness, difficult weather conditions, and more. Many will never reach the safety that they so desperately seek. Some will die along the way, while others will be captured, imprisoned, or turned away at borders.

The Hossein family fled Burma to escape the violence and persecution that is suffered by the Rohingya, a Muslim minority living mainly on the west coast of the country. They had to walk for three days in the jungle without food to reach Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh. Caritas Bangladesh, a Development and Peace partner, is tirelessly working there to protect and support Rohingya refugees by providing emergency shelters, access to clean water, as well as safe latrines and showers for women and girls.

4th symbol: A dish to be shared

This dish to be shared symbolizes solidarity, a culture of encounter, and the links between forced migrants and their host community. This symbol also evokes the hope of forced migrants that during their journey they will meet people who will reach out to them.

In some parts of the Middle East, tradition dictates that bread and salt are to be served to forge an alliance between two people. Once these foods are shared, the two parties will always remember each other. Inspired by a workshop on peacebuilding led by House of Peace, a Development and Peace partner, a group of Syrian refugees decided to breathe new life into this tradition. Women got up very early in the morning to make bread and then went door-to-door to offer it to their Lebanese neighbours as thanks for welcoming them into their community.

Conclusion of the presentation of the Symbols of Solidarity by the presenter

The Development and Peace Share Lent campaign invites us to be fellow travelers with our sisters and brothers who are forced to flee their homes. Let us be the voice that kindles hope and compassion, and rallies hearts on the path of solidarity. We now invite you to shake hands with your neighbour to express welcome and solidarity with each other and with all those around the world who have been forced to flee their homes. May the Lord illuminate their path and guide them to safety.