

A LESSON ON WELCOMING OTHERS

GRADES 7-9 -- Immigration - Lesson II (Year I, Day 1)

Goal: Students will learn that people are meant for community, which means loving others and treating them with respect both in theory and in reality. What does this look like in our culture? We explore the topic of immigration through the lens of building a Christian community.

Lesson: The first video explains the long relationship between the Catholic Church and immigrants in the United States. The video teaches that as Catholics, we have a role in welcoming immigrants and helping them make a home here. The second video addresses the concerns that some might feel about the so-called “dangers” of immigration by presenting Catholic principles. It may or may not be relevant to your particular students, but may be helpful if questions arise.

Watch: [Immigration and the Catholic Church](#) from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
[The Church & Immigration](#) from Ascension Presents (optional supplement)

Discussion:

- What are some of the reasons people leave their country of origin?
- How do you think immigrants feel upon moving to a new country?
- What might be some difficulties immigrants face when moving to another country?
- What role does the Church have in welcoming immigrants?
- What does it mean to say “we help them not because they are Catholics but because we are Catholics”?
- How can recognizing our common human dignity change how we see others?
- How is helping immigrants an experience of meeting Christ?
- How can you help immigrants or others who are simply new to something that you are already familiar with?
- What are some characteristics you need in order to welcome immigrants?

Activity: This activity introduces the historic and present struggles and triumphs of immigrants coming to the United States. Through this tour, students can learn to question what has changed in immigration over the past 100 years and the difficulties that persist today. Through this activity, students should begin to question what they can do to make immigrants feel welcome and how they can learn from immigrants.

Take an interactive tour of Ellis Island: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/tour/>

Through the explore Ellis Island and Meet Young Immigrants tabs on the website, students can learn about immigration 100 years ago and today. Ask them to share answers aloud to the following questions: “*What do you think has changed for immigrants today in comparison to those who entered through Ellis Island? What difficulties do immigrants today share with immigrants from 100 years ago? How could people have made the immigrants feel welcome 100 years ago? How can we make immigrants feel welcome today? What can we learn from immigrants?*”

Activity: Choose one activity
[Deciding to Immigrate: A History](#) - using real stories of immigrants to the US throughout history, this activity helps student explore the reasons why people have chosen to immigrate and connects the reasons to human rights
[The Waiting in Line Game](#) - students pretend to be border agents, immigration lawyers, and people trying to enter the US, exploring the experiences of immigrants (*Note- Because of the complexity of immigration rules, this activity may be challenging for younger students*)

These activities are taken from “[Energy of a Nation: Immigrants in America](#)” produced by the Advocates for Human Rights.

Prayer:

*Loving God, we thank you for creating all the people of the world
and for allowing us to learn from their cultures and beliefs.
Remind us to see your face when we meet new people for the first time.
Give us courage to welcome them and show them love and courtesy.
Grant safety to all immigrants and refugees who leave their homes
for a new land, looking for safety, peace, and opportunity for their families.*

Amen.

Lesson adapted from the plans on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Life, Justice and Peace website