

Mass of Solidarity and Cultural Celebration

In support of migrants and refugees



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BY JOE EIDEN

IT ISN'T COMMON to walk into a Catholic church before Mass and hear the rhythmic pounding of drums echoing against stone walls, see onlookers in the pews watching children perform a native dance, and the Archbishop beaming with pride, watching his flock share its array of cultures. The Mass of Solidarity and Cultural Celebration held at The Basilica the Second Sunday of Advent 2017 was a vibrant, festive evening.

Following Pope Francis' appeal to "Share the Journey" with our sisters and brothers around the world who are displaced from their homes, the Mass of Solidarity highlighted the rich cultural diversity in Catholic parishes across the Archdiocese. The Mass offered all in attendance a snapshot into the true definition of the word catholic: diverse, broad, comprehensive, and universal.

The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis is home to more than 800,000 Catholics celebrating Mass regularly in 11 different languages. All were invited to share the richness of their culture by wearing the clothes of their native culture or ethnicity.

Throughout the Mass, members of the Aztec, Cameroon, Indigenous Peoples, Karen, Karenni, and Vietnamese communities led the diverse mix of musical styles and dance. Archbishop Bernard Hebda celebrated the Mass, with concelebrants Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Fr. John Bauer (The Basilica), Fr. Dale Korogi (Ascension, Minneapolis), Fr. Donald Willard, CSsR (Saint Alphonsus, Brooklyn Center), Fr. Augustine Truong (Saint Anne-Saint Joseph Hein, Minneapolis) and Deacon Naokao Yang (Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Paul). The first and

Archdiocesan Mass of Solidarity and Cultural Celebration held at The Basilica included music and dance from Aztec, Cameroon, Indigenous Peoples, Karen, Karenni, and Vietnamese communities, December 9, 2017.

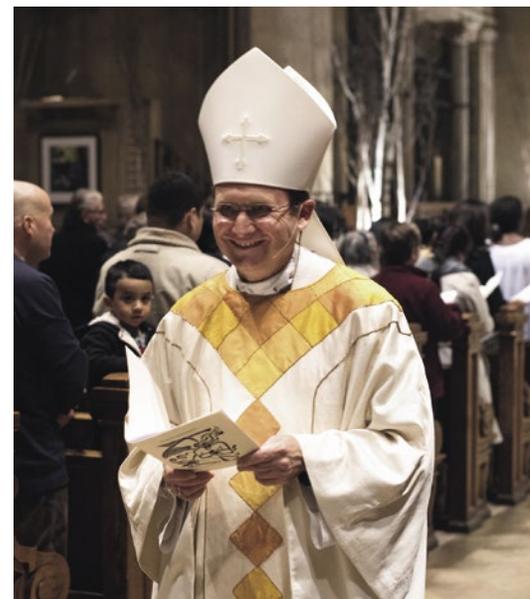
second readings were proclaimed in Spanish and Swahili, respectively, and the gospel in English. Bishop Cozzens delivered his homily alternating between Spanish and English, and the intercessions were offered in seven languages. The Mass was truly an answer to Pope Francis' call.

In September 2017, the Pope and Caritas Internationalis launched a two-year campaign to promote global action and awareness of the plight of migrants. "Christ Himself asks us to welcome our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters with open arms," the Pope proclaimed during his weekly General Audience in September. "When the arms are open, they are ready for a sincere embrace, an affectionate embrace, a warm embrace."

The situation is indeed dire and it can be difficult to grasp the enormity of the crisis. There are currently over 65 million forcibly displaced people across the globe. They are fleeing war, religious and ethnic persecution, and, in many cases, natural disasters. To put the scale of this crisis in perspective, 65 million people would fill US Bank Stadium 984 times.

And the crisis does not end there. Public policy debate rages in the U.S. over how to not only address the refugee crisis, but also immigration, including the plight of 'Dreamers', individuals who were brought to the U.S. as children and have no legal status. This is no small number either — there are an estimated 800,000 'Dreamers' currently residing in the U.S. Bishop Cozzens urged those in attendance to support legislation protecting 'Dreamers', saying that all human beings want the same things: "To provide for our families. To raise our children. To worship our God." And in a nod to standing in solidarity with these people, he said, "If these things are criminal, then we are all criminals together."

Continued.





PHOTOS / ELYSE RETHLAKE

Given the magnitude of this crisis, solutions may seem out of reach or reserved for those who wield political power. But Catholic organizations around the world are leading the effort to inform and inspire this movement of solidarity: the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Catholic Charities, among others. To learn more about what you can do to join in solidarity with migrants and refugees, visit www.sharejourney.org. The recommendations range from donations and prayer to social media and legislative advocacy.

The Basilica community has been active in an Immigrant Support Ministry for several years. Through partnerships with Lutheran Social Services and Advocates for Human Rights, The Basilica has sponsored seven refugee families and four families seeking asylum since 2015. The ministry helps families assimilate to their new life in Minnesota — supporting them with services ranging from rental assistance to learning the bus system and enrolling their children in school.

As the immigration crisis grows increasingly challenging, Bishop Cozzens's words bring comfort and perspective. "None of us is in our homeland," he said in his homily. "None of us are truly at home because we are not made for this home." We are called to welcome our sisters and brothers with open arms and a warm embrace in this life, and we look with joyful hope to receiving the same in the next.

Joe Eiden is a parishioner and a eucharistic minister.



Dancers, presiders, and attendees at the Archdiocesan Mass of Solidarity and Cultural Celebration, December 9, 2017.

