

**IMMIGRANTS HERE PLAN CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM;**  
**CHURCH IN CITY WILL HOLD SPECIAL MASS SUNDAY HONORING**  
**POLITICAL REFUGEES**

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## **Body**

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Asmaro Belay and his family fled to St. Louis after escaping civil war in their homeland of Eritrea. Phuong Le left her native Vietnam with her family after her husband had to suffer in a **political** prison camp for many years. And at least 11 Nigerian families resettled here after fleeing their native country, where torture has become commonplace.

On **Sunday**, these families and many other **political refugees** and **immigrants will** gather to **celebrate** their diverse backgrounds and their new lives in St. Louis. They **will** worship at a **Mass** at St. Pius V Catholic **Church**, 3310 South Grand Boulevard.

Some **will** speak of their experiences in resettling here after suffering through war, poverty and deprivation. They **will** pray together for peace and give thanks for their new opportunities.

New **refugees** have settled in various parts of the St. Louis area, and many are in the parish served by St. Pius V **Church**.

"The point is to **celebrate** the contributions of **immigrants** and **refugees** to American society and to educate people here about the struggles **refugees** face," said Laurie Latuda, director of Catholic Charities **Refugee** Services here. "It's a chance to educate people that the community is both people born here and **refugees** and **immigrants** who have recently become part of the community."

Sister Paulette Weindel, who began a **refugee** program for St. Pius, says the purpose of the gathering is, "to keep the **refugees**, **immigrants** and migrant workers in our awareness and to see how we can advocate for them."

"Some are fleeing persecution, some fleeing wars. We know the situation in Bosnia, and Sudan is in flames. The Angolan situation is still being settled," she said.

At the **Mass**, recent **immigrants** and **refugees will** read from Scriptures and offer prayers of petition in their native languages of Bosnian, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Filipino and such obscure tongues as Tigrinian, a language of Eritrea. The service **will** begin with a procession of **immigrants** and **political refugees** through the **church**.

Among the groups represented in the service **will** be Vietnamese, Mexicans, Angolans, Nicaraguans, Filipinos, Bosnians, Ukrainians, Nigerians, Sudanese, Eritreans and South Africans. Others expected to attend may come from Somalia and perhaps Croatia and Cuba.

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The **Mass** **will** begin at 10 a.m. A reception **will** follow.

The events **Sunday** are a way to **celebrate** National Migration Week, which is sponsored by the United States Catholic Conference. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the Catholic Conference began National Migration Week 19 years ago. In St. Louis, St. Pius and Catholic Charities **Refugee** Services this year are sponsoring the **Mass**. This year's theme is Reflecting God's Love for All.

"We want all of St. Louis to know we **will** be **celebrating** National Migration Week," Latuda said.

St. Pius V **Church**, a massive and towering light-colored stone edifice, fills much of a block at Grand and Utah Street in St. Louis. Nearby, markets and restaurants, sights and sounds reflect the diverse cultures of the neighborhood.

The **church** offers warmth, solace and a large variety of **immigrant** and **refugee** programs. It is also affiliated with **special** programs that counsel **refugees** suffering war trauma, tutor **immigrant** women and teach English as a second language.

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