



DIOCESE
of DALLAS

Welcome the World. Welcome the Stranger

A World Night of Faith, Culture, and Prayer

Purpose of the Night

This evening invites young adults to gather around the joy of welcoming our brother and sisters from around the world, and learning about the cultures, faith, struggles, and Catholic communities of different nations. The goal is not just to celebrate soccer, but to recognize the dignity of every people, the beauty of the universal Church, and our call to communion as the Body of Christ.

Parish Implementation Note

This resource is designed as an optional guide for parish leaders who may choose to implement a World Cup gathering night for young adults in their local community. Each parish is encouraged to discern whether the gathering is a good fit for its young adults and to adapt the format, timing, countries, discussion questions, and activities based on the needs and pastoral priorities of the parish. The guide is intended to provide a starting point and practical structure rather than a required program.

Theme

Welcome the World. Welcome the Stranger: Discovering Christ in Communities Around the World

Suggested Schedule:

Part of the Night	Suggested Time
Welcome and Opening Prayer	10 minutes
Icebreaker: World Connections	10 minutes
Scripture and Reflection	15 minutes
Learning Activity: Nations and Catholic Communities	25 minutes
Small Group Discussion	20 minutes
Closing Prayer and Sending Forth	10 minutes

Leader Preparation

Before the gathering, choose from the countries represented in the World Cup or in our local community. Try to include countries from different continents. For each country, prepare a simple one-page profile or table with:

- Country name and flag
- Language or languages spoken
- Popular foods or cultural traditions
- Catholic presence in the country
- A saint, Marian devotion, or Catholic tradition connected to that country
- A current challenge faced by the people there
- A prayer intention for that community

Possible Country Examples

Country	Catholic Connection
Japan	St. Francis Xavier, Kyushu and Nagasaki, St. Mary Cathedral (Tokyo), Nishizaka Hill (26 Martyrs)
Netherlands	St. Boniface, St. Willibrord, St. Lidwina, Martyrs of Gorkum, St. Nicholas of Myra, The Silent Walk (Stille Omgang)
England	Cardinal John Henry Newman, St. Carlo Acutis (Born) St. Augustine of Canterbury, St. Bede the Venerable, St. Edward the Confessor, Formation Martyrs,
Croatia	St. Jerome, St. Blaise, St. Anthony of Padua, Marija Bistrica, Patronage of St. Joseph
Argentina	St. Maria Antonia de Paz y Figueroa ("Mama Antula"), St. Jose Gabriel del Rosario Brochero "Gaucha Priest", St. Hector Valdivielso Saez, Gauchito Gil
Austria	St. Leopold III, St. Florian, Salzburg Cathedral, St. Florian Monastery
Sweden	St. Bridget of Sweden, St. Catherine of Vadstena, Vadstena Abbey, All Saints Day
Jordan	St. John the Baptist, Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Mount Nebo, Tell Mar Elias

Opening
Leader says:



Tonight, we gather around something that brings much of the world together: the World Cup. Soccer has a way of crossing languages, cultures, and borders. But as Catholics, we also belong to something even deeper and more universal: the Body of Christ.

The word Catholic means universal. Our Church is present in every part of the world, in large cathedrals, small villages, mission churches, college campuses, homes, and communities that are joyful, suffering, growing, and witnessing to Christ in powerful ways.

Tonight is an invitation to learn, listen, pray, and remember that the people we cheer for, read about, or see on a screen are not strangers. They are our brothers and sisters.

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord Jesus,

You gather every nation, language, and people into one family.

Tonight, open our hearts to the beauty of your Church throughout the world.

Help us to see each country not only by its flag, team, or culture, but through the dignity of its people and the faith of its communities.

Teach us to listen with humility, to learn with gratitude, and to pray with compassion.

May this gathering remind us that we are one Body in Christ, called to love beyond borders, serve beyond comfort, and rejoice in the many ways your Gospel is alive in the world.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Icebreaker: World Connections

Invite participants to answer one or two of the following:

1. What country do you usually cheer for during the World Cup, and why?
2. Is there a country or culture you have always wanted to visit or learn more about?
3. What is one food, tradition, or language from another country that you enjoy?
4. Have you ever experienced Mass, prayer, or Catholic culture in another language or country? What was that like?

Leader note: *Keep this light and relational. The purpose is to help people recognize personal connections to the wider world.*

Scripture Reading

Acts 2:1-12

The Coming of the Spirit.

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we



hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God." They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, "What does this mean?"

Core image for the night: (Image of Pentecost)

At Pentecost, people from many nations hear the mighty works of God proclaimed in their own languages. The Holy Spirit does not erase culture or language; He gathers them into communion and sends the Church on mission.

Short Reflection for the Leader

This passage gives us a glimpse of the Church at its beginning. The Holy Spirit descends, and people from many nations hear the Gospel in a way they can understand. The Catholic vision of unity is not sameness. God does not erase the beauty of different peoples, languages, and traditions. Instead, He draws all of it into communion. The world gathering gives us a small glimpse of the world's diversity. Different flags, songs, languages, foods, histories, and hopes are all on display. But our faith reminds us to look deeper. Behind every country, are the people and the dignity each person has. Behind every culture is a story. Behind every community are joys, struggles, wounds, and gifts. As Catholics, we are invited to love the world the way Christ does: not from a distance, not as spectators, but as members of one human family.

Tonight, as we learn about different countries, we are also learning how to pray with the Church, suffer with the Church, and rejoice with the Church throughout the world.

Learning Activity: Around the World with the Church

Setup

Divide participants into small groups. Assign each group one country. Give each group a country profile, or set up stations around the room with different country information.

Each group should discuss:

1. What stood out to you about this country?
2. What surprised you about the Catholic community there?
3. What gift does this culture or Church community offer to the wider Church?
4. What challenge or suffering should we pray for?
5. What can this country teach us about being Catholic?

After 10-15 minutes, invite each group to share a brief summary.

Sample Country Profile Template

Country	
Flag	Place image or drawing here.
Languages Spoken	
Cultural Notes	Food, music, traditions, holidays, family life, sports, etc.
Catholic Life	How is the Catholic faith lived there? Is Catholicism a major religion or a minority presence?



Saint, Devotion, or Catholic Tradition	Examples: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Korean Martyrs, Divine Mercy, Simbang Gabi, Lourdes, etc.
Current Challenge	What social, economic, religious, or human concern can we pray for?
Prayer Intention	Tonight we pray for the people of _____, especially for _____.

Small Group Discussion Guide

After the learning activity, bring people back into small groups or keep them in their assigned groups.

Discussion Questions

1. What country or community did you learn about tonight that stood out to you most?
2. What did tonight teach you about the word Catholic meaning universal?
3. Where do you see beauty in the way different cultures express the same Catholic faith?
4. How can learning about Catholics around the world help us become less self-focused in our own faith?
5. What is one community, country, or group of people you feel called to pray for more intentionally?
6. How can our young adult community become more welcoming to people from different cultures or backgrounds?

Leader Notes for Discussion

Encourage participants to avoid stereotypes or overly simple statements about countries or cultures. The goal is to learn with humility.

Helpful phrase: Tonight, we are not reducing a country to food, flags, or soccer. We are trying to see the people, the Church, and the presence of Christ in that community.

If the conversation gets quiet, ask: What is something this country's Catholic community might understand about faith that we need to learn from?

Catholic Teaching Connection

The Church is universal. This means the Church is not bound to one nation, language, race, or culture. The Gospel is meant for every people, and every culture has gifts that can help reveal the beauty of Christ. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit allowed people from many nations to hear the Gospel in their own languages. This reminds us that God speaks into every culture and calls every people into communion.

The Church is not American, European, Latin American, African, or Asian alone. The Church is Catholic. She belongs to Christ and is made visible through every people who receive Him.

Optional Second Scripture

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Use this as an optional additional reading or closing reflection. The passage teaches that, although the body has many parts, all are one body in Christ through one Spirit.

One Body, Many Parts.:-

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one



body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

Reflection point: The Body of Christ is not complete when we ignore one another. We need the witness, faith, suffering, joy, and traditions of Catholics around the world.

Prayer Activity: Prayers of the Faithful

Invite each group to write one prayer intention for the country they learned about. After each group shares, close with the prayer below.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus,

You are Lord of every nation and King of all creation. Tonight, we give you thanks for the beauty of the world you have made: for every language, culture, people, and community. We thank you for the gift of the Catholic Church, which gathers us into one family across every border. Help us to be young adults who are curious, compassionate, and faithful. Teach us to see our brothers and sisters not as strangers, but as members of your Body. We pray for the countries we learned about tonight, for their joys, their struggles, their families, their young people, and their Catholic communities. May we carry them in prayer, and may our own community become a place of welcome, unity, and mission.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

St. John Paul II, pray for us.

All holy men and women from every nation, pray for us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



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Optional Add-ons

- Food Table: Invite participants to bring snacks or desserts from different countries.
- Flag Prayer Wall: Place a world map or flags around the room. Have participants write prayer intentions on sticky notes and place them near the country they are praying for.
- Saint Cards: Create simple cards featuring saints from different countries represented in the World Cup.
- Music: Play Catholic worship music or Catholic hymns from different languages as people arrive.
- Challenge for the Week: Invite each participant to choose one country from the evening and pray for that country every day for one week.

Additional Resources

- [LIFE IN ABUDNACNE: Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV on the Value of Sport](#)
- [DILEXI TE: Apostolic Exhortation, The Holy Father Pope Leo XIV to all Christians on Love For the Poor](#)
- [Q&A Dialogue between Pope Leo XIV and Young People during the Jubilee Vigil](#)
- [CHRISTUS VIVIT: Apostolic Exhortation, The Holy Father Francis to Young People and to the Entire People of God](#)

