



"...I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matt 25:31-46)

“We don’t see things
as they are; we see
things as WE are...”

Anais Nin



We call on the Holy Spirit to inspire us today.

Gathering Prayer

Gathering Prayer

Loving God,
we meet here today in your name.
Your spirit binds us together in respect,
dignity and service.
Gather our community together now
and in the future.
Give us the grace to look beyond all divisions.
Guide us to see the oneness
to which all your people belong.
We gather here to extend the thread
that binds us all together
Help us to do our part in maintaining
the continuity of the kingdom.

Amen.



*"Life is the first Gift,
Love the second and
Understanding the third"* Marge Piercy.

To gain some insight into this topic we need to be aware of and understand all the key phrases and concepts.

Asylum seeker:

A person who, from fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, social group, or political opinion, has crossed an international frontier into a country in which he or she hopes to be granted refugee status.



Boat People:

Refugees, especially from Vietnam in the late 1970s, who leave by boat hoping to be picked up by ships of another country. People who escape from their country in small boats to travel to another country in the hope that they will be able to live there.

Conflict:

A fight, battle, or struggle, especially a prolonged struggle; strife.

Displaced:

Persons who lack a home, as through political exile, destruction of their previous shelter, or lack of financial resources.

IDP:

An internally displaced person (IDP) is someone who is forced to flee his or her home but who remains within his or her country's borders. They are often referred to as refugees, although they do not fall within the current legal definition of a refugee.

Political asylum:

Refuge given by one country to a citizen of another country to protect that person from arrest or persecution.

Queue jumper:

The act of taking a place in a queue ahead of those already queuing.

Refugee:

A person who flees for refuge or safety, especially to a foreign country, as in time of political upheaval, war, etc.

Scripture

Matthew 2: 1-15

Scripture

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard of this he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people of Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

"May the Lord sustain those people and institutions who work with generosity to assure a welcome to refugees, recognise their dignity and give them reasons for hope".

Pope Francis June 2014



(Source: He Qui)

Reflection

Reflection on the Scripture

In the scripture we learn about the circumstances that lead Mary and her family to become refugees. After hearing about the massacre of all boys under two years old, Joseph leads his family away from the volatile environment to find safety in another land. A story that mirrors many others.

Pope Francis urges us show love and have compassion for the millions who face a world of fear, uncertainty and possibly death:

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE 101st WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES (2015)

Church without frontiers, Mother to all

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus is “the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person” (Evangelii Gaudium, 209). His solicitude, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized, invites all of us to care for the frailest and to recognize his suffering countenance, especially in the victims of new forms of poverty and slavery. The Lord says: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (Mt 25:35-36). The mission of the Church, herself a pilgrim in the world and the Mother of all, is thus to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind. For this reason, the theme for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees is: Church without frontiers, Mother to all.

The Church opens her arms to welcome all people, without distinction or limits, in order to proclaim that “God is love” (1 Jn4:8,16). After his death and resurrection, Jesus entrusted to the disciples the mission of being his witnesses and proclaiming the Gospel of joy and mercy. On the day of Pentecost, the disciples left the Upper Room with courage and enthusiasm; the strength of the Holy Spirit overcame their doubts and uncertainties and enabled all to understand the disciples’ preaching in their own language. From the beginning, the Church has been a mother with a heart open to the whole world, and has been without borders. This mission has continued for two thousand years. But even in the first centuries, the missionary proclamation spoke of the universal motherhood of the Church, which was then developed in the writings of the Fathers and taken up by the Second Vatican Council. The Council Fathers spoke of *Ecclesia Mater* to explain the Church’s nature. She begets sons and daughters and “takes them in and embraces them with her love and in her heart” (Lumen Gentium, 14).

The Church without frontiers, Mother to all, spreads throughout the world a culture of acceptance and solidarity, in which no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable. When living out this motherhood effectively, the Christian community nourishes, guides and indicates the way, accompanying all with patience, and drawing close to them through prayer and works of mercy.

Today this takes on a particular significance. In fact, in an age of such vast movements of migration, large numbers of people are leaving their homelands, with a suitcase full of fears and desires, to undertake a hopeful and dangerous trip in search of more humane living conditions. Often, however, such migration gives rise to suspicion and hostility, even in ecclesial communities, prior to any knowledge of the migrants' lives or their stories of persecution and destitution. In such cases, suspicion and prejudice conflict with the biblical commandment of welcoming with respect and solidarity the stranger in need.

On the other hand, we sense in our conscience the call to touch human misery, and to put into practice the commandment of love that Jesus left us when he identified himself with the stranger, with the one who suffers, with all the innocent victims of violence and exploitation. Because of the weakness of our nature, however, "we are tempted to be that kind of Christian who keeps the Lord's wounds at arm's length" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 270).

The courage born of faith, hope and love enables us to reduce the distances that separate us from human misery. Jesus Christ is always waiting to be recognized in migrants and refugees, in displaced persons and in exiles, and through them he calls us to share our resources, and occasionally to give up something of our acquired riches. Pope Paul VI spoke of this when he said that "the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others" (*Octogesima Adveniens*, 23).

The multicultural character of society today, for that matter, encourages the Church to take on new commitments of solidarity, communion and evangelization. Migration movements, in fact, call us to deepen and strengthen the values needed to guarantee peaceful coexistence between persons and cultures. Achieving mere tolerance that respects diversity and ways of sharing between different backgrounds and cultures is not sufficient. This is precisely where the Church contributes to overcoming frontiers and encouraging the "moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization ... towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world" (*Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014*).

Migration movements, however, are on such a scale that only a systematic and active cooperation between States and international organizations can be capable of regulating and managing such movements effectively. For migration affects everyone, not only because of the extent of the phenomenon, but also because of "the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises, and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community" (*Caritas in Veritate*, 62).

At the international level, frequent debates take place regarding the appropriateness, methods and required norms to deal with the phenomenon of migration. There are agencies and organizations on the international, national and local level which work strenuously to serve those seeking a better life through migration. Notwithstanding their generous and laudable efforts, a more decisive and constructive action is required, one which relies on a universal network of cooperation, based on safeguarding the dignity and centrality of every human person. This will lead to greater effectiveness in the fight against the shameful and criminal trafficking of human beings, the violation of fundamental rights, and all forms of violence, oppression and enslavement. Working together, however, requires reciprocity, joint-action, openness and trust, in the knowledge that "no country can singlehandedly face the difficulties associated with this phenomenon, which is now so widespread that it affects every continent in the twofold movement of immigration and emigration" (*Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2014*).

It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane. At the same time, greater efforts are needed to guarantee the easing of conditions, often brought about by war or famine, which compel whole peoples to leave their native countries.

Solidarity with migrants and refugees must be accompanied by the courage and creativity necessary to develop, on a world-wide level, a more just and equitable financial and economic order, as well as an increasing commitment to peace, the indispensable condition for all authentic progress.

Dear migrants and refugees! You have a special place in the heart of the Church, and you help her to enlarge her heart and to manifest her motherhood towards the entire human family. Do not lose your faith and hope! Let us think of the Holy Family during the flight in Egypt: Just as the maternal heart of the Blessed Virgin and the kind heart of Saint Joseph kept alive the confidence that God would never abandon them, so in you may the same hope in the Lord never be wanting. I entrust you to their protection and I cordially impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 3 September 2014



Reflection:

Q: How can we make the 'stranger'/the 'refugee' welcomed in our community?

Q: What is something practical you can do?

Watch the clip on UNHCR Global trends 2014
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Rf-K2DWOwY>

Q: How do we make the teachings of Jesus Christ known in a world full of apathy?

Q: How can we provide hope when everything seems so hopeless?

Q: What will be your/my/our contribution as Marists?

Discussion

Discussion

Everyone has a story:

Aladdin is a Kuwaiti – born Palestinian, living in 'space', born stateless.

Bun is trying to heal after living in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime.

Mariam is an Assyrian fleeing from Iraq's civil war.

Herman, a West Papuan political refugee, is finding his feet and voice again.

Click on the link below to watch some stories, like those outlined above. Take the time to reflect and share your thoughts.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/refugees/home.html>

Reflection:

Q: What is happening?

Q: Who deserves our compassion? Why?

Q: How is it we can easily overlook some suffering but be deeply moved by others?



Sometimes we need to look at things with a different perspective and come down from the mountain.

We are Inspired

How do we know we are doing the right and just thing? Where does our inspiration come from?

“God is revealed to us through those we meet. Young and old people, members of our families and communities, the refugee and prisoner, the sick person and the caregiver, our co-workers and our neighbour, all are mirrors reflecting the God of life and of love.”

(55. Water from the Rock)

“How much smaller could he have made himself than a little piece of bread – the Bread of Life? How much more weak and helpless? And how much more ugly could he make himself than a badly diseased leper? And yet it is he. We must know it. As I know that two and two make four, I must know that it is Jesus in THAT person.”

(Blessed Mother Theresa)

“We are called to reach out to those who find themselves in the existential peripheries of our societies and to show particular solidarity with the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters: the poor, the disabled, the unborn and the sick, migrants and refugees, the elderly and the young who lack employment.”

(Message to the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches Oct. 4, 2013)



Closing Prayer:

Closing Prayer

All:

Father,

You so loved the world that you gave us your Son, Jesus Christ. And Jesus taught us to love others.

We journey through life, as faith filled people, loving others as we encounter them.

Still, there are those we have not met, and may never meet, who know only fear, pain and loneliness.

Give us clarity of heart and strength of conviction, that we may stand up and become people of action and love, with a pure heart.

We ask Mary, our Good Mother, to guides us as we walk this path towards a more just world.

Amen.

St Marcellin Champagant:

Pray for us

Mary our Good Mother:

Pray for us

And let us always remember:

To pray for one another

