



MINNESOTA
STATEWIDE
IMMIGRATION
SUNDAY
LITURGY
GUIDE

The Epiphany of the Lord
January 8, 2012

*Rise, take the child and his
mother, flee to Egypt, and
stay there until I tell you.*
-Matthew 2:13



www.immigrationsundaymn.org

PRAYER FOR OUR IMMIGRANT SISTERS AND BROTHERS

Blessed are You, Lord Jesus Christ.
You crossed every border
between Divinity and humanity
to make your home with us.
Help us to welcome you in newcomers,
migrants and refugees.

Blessed are You, God of all nations.
You bless our land richly
with goods of creation
and people made in your image.
Grant that we will be stewards and peacemakers,
who live as your children.

Blessed are You, Holy Spirit.
You work in the hearts of all
to bring about harmony and goodwill.
Strengthen us in human solidarity
and in hope.

God of all people, grant us vision
to see your presence in our midst,
especially in our immigrant sisters and brothers.
Give us courage
to open the door to our neighbors
and grace to build a society of justice.

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On the Cover

Vittore Carpaccio
The Flight into Egypt
c. 1515

Oil on Canvas
National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING ON IMMIGRATION



The Catholic position on immigration and people on the move is firmly rooted in the Church's social teaching, which is comprised of: the Gospels and the words of Christ; Papal Encyclicals and Statements; and Bishops' Statements and Pastoral Letters.

GOSPEL FOUNDATIONS

Both the Old and New Testaments tell compelling stories of refugees forced to flee because of oppression. Exodus tells the story of the Chosen People, Israel, who were victims of slavery in Egypt. They were utterly helpless by themselves, but with God's powerful intervention they were able to escape and take refuge in the desert. For forty years they lived as wanderers with no homeland of their own. Finally, God fulfilled his ancient promise and settled them on the land that they could finally call home. The Israelites' experience was so painful and frightening that God ordered his people for all time to have special care for the stranger: "When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Leviticus 19:33-34)

One need not look further than the life and words of Jesus to understand that people on the move - migrants, immigrants and refugees – are special in the eyes of God. The New Testament begins with Matthew's story of Joseph and Mary fleeing into Egypt with their newborn son, Jesus. Our Savior Himself lived as a refugee because His own land was not safe. In His public ministry, Jesus Himself was an itinerant man, moving from place to place, "with nowhere to lay His Head." (Matthew 8:20)

Jesus reiterates the Old Testament command to love and care for the stranger, a criterion by which we will be judged: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me." (Mt 25:35) The Apostle Paul asserts the absolute equality of all people before God: "There is neither Jew nor Greek. . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:28) In Christ, the human race is one before God, equal in dignity and rights.

When we welcome our immigrant sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself; for in the face of our neighbors, we see the face of Christ. This is made clear in the Gospel of Luke when the disciples, on the road to Emmaus, (Luke 24:13-15) become witnesses to the Truth by welcoming the stranger: Christ.

PAPAL TEACHINGS

In the first social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (*On the Condition of Labor*, 1891), Pope Leo XIII established that people have a right to work to survive, and to support their families. Pope Pius XII, in the apostolic constitution *Exsul Familia* (*On the Spiritual Care of the Migrant*, 1952), reaffirms that migrants have a right to a life with dignity, and therefore a right to migrate toward that end: "Then, according to the teachings of *Rerum Novarum*, the right of the family to a life worthy of human dignity is recognized. When this happens, migration attains its natural scope..."

In the encyclical, *Pacem in terris* (*Peace on Earth*, 1963), Pope John XXIII clearly articulates both the right to migrate and the right not to migrate: "Every human being has the right to the freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of their country; and, when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate and take up residence elsewhere." Pope John Paul II reaffirmed this basic teaching in an address to the *New World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Immigrants* in 1985: "Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own country. When there are just reasons in favor of it,

he must be permitted to migrate to other countries and to take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a particular state does not deprive him of membership to the human family, nor of citizenship in the universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men.”

In the 2009 encyclical, *Caritas in veritate* (*Charity in Truth*), Pope Benedict XVI looks at the relationship between mass migration and authentic human development. Pope Benedict highlights the “significant contribution” that migrants give to their host countries through their labor, and warns against treating migrant people as commodities. All human beings are endowed with basic human rights. The Holy Father notes the important relationship among poverty, unemployment and the dignity of work. Any authentic form of development should focus on creating conditions that enable people to both find work in their community and provide educational opportunities for their children.

Catholic scholars often refer generally to a set of papal encyclicals called “social encyclicals.” These documents are meant to address economic and social issues that world is facing at the time of the encyclical’s publication. While there is no official list, theologians usually include the following documents:

- ***Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII**, May 15, 1891
- ***Quadregesima anno*, Pope Pius XII**, May 15, 1931
- ***Mater et Magistra*, Pope John XXIII**, May 15, 1961
- ***Pacem in terris*, Pope John XXIII**, April 11, 1963
- ***Populorum progressio*, Pope Paul VI**, March 26, 1967
- ***Laborem exercens*, Pope John Paul II**, September 14, 1981
- ***Sollicitudo rei socialis*, Pope John Paul II**, December 30, 1987
- ***Centisimus annus*, Pope John Paul II**, May 1, 1991
- ***Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI**, June 29, 2009

STATEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

In their 2003 Pastoral Letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, the United States’ Bishops applied the Gospel and Papal teachings to U.S. immigration policy. The following five governing principles as to how the Church should respond to immigration policy proposals are articulated in the Letter:

1. People have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.

This principle states that a person has a right *not* to migrate. Economic, social and political conditions in a person’s homeland should provide an opportunity for a person to work, and support his or her family with dignity and safety. In public policy terms, efforts should be made to address global economic inequities through just trade practices, economic development and debt relief. Peacemaking efforts should be advanced to end conflict, which, oftentimes forces people to flee their homes.

2. People have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.

When people are unable to find work and support themselves and their families, they have a right to migrate to other countries and work. This right is not absolute. As Pope John XXIII stated, the right to emigrate applies when “there are just reasons for it.” Today, global poverty is rampant and political unrest has resulted in wars and persecution. Consequently, migrants who are forced to leave their homelands, and seek to survive and support their families, must be given special consideration.

3. Sovereign nations have a right to control their borders.

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to protect and control their borders. However, it is not an absolute right. Nations also have an obligation to the universal common good, as articulated by Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in terris* (Peace on Earth), and thus should seek to accommodate migration to the greatest extent possible. According to Catholic social teaching, powerful economic nations, such as the United States, have a higher obligation to serve the universal common good. Because labor demands in the United States

attract foreign laborers, the United States should establish an immigration system that legally and safely allows people to enter the nation to obtain jobs and reunite with family members.

4. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.

People who flee their homelands because they fear persecution should be afforded safe haven and protection in another country. Conflict and political unrest in many parts of the world force people to leave their homes for fear of death or harm. The United States should employ a refugee and asylum system that protects asylum seekers and refugees, and offers them a haven from persecution.

5. The human rights and dignity of undocumented immigrants should be respected.

People who enter a nation without proper authorization or who over-stay their visas should be treated with respect and dignity. They should not be detained in deplorable conditions for lengthy periods of time, shackled by their feet and hands, or abused in any manner. They should be afforded due process of the law and, if applicable, allowed to articulate a fear of returning to their home before a qualified adjudicator. They should not be blamed for the social ills of a nation.

STATEMENTS OF MINNESOTA BISHOPS

Over the past several years, the Bishops of Minnesota have come out with a number of statements together and individually that address the issue of immigration in the state. Below is a selection of some of the most recent documents they have drafted together.

2010 CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MINNESOTA STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION June 15, 2010

We, the Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, again issue an urgent call for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. Without national reform, we fear that states will enact legislation that is neither compassionate nor just.

Near the end of the 2010 Minnesota legislative session, legislation modeled after Arizona's new law was introduced in our state's House of Representatives. Unfortunately, such onerous legislation would disrupt our communities, violate the human dignity and rights of undocumented immigrants, and break families apart.

The way we treat immigrants, whether documented or undocumented, is a matter of justice. It reflects our commitment to fairness and decency, our respect for persons and families. It also affects our nation's economic growth and well-being. According to the latest report to the Minnesota Business Immigration Reform Coalition, "the U.S. Council of Economic Advisors estimates that the country's net gain from immigration is \$37 billion per year."

In an April 16, 2008 meeting with the U.S. Catholic Bishops, our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, encouraged us to welcome immigrants and "... help them flourish in their new home. This, indeed, is what your fellow countrymen have done for generations. From the beginning, they have opened their doors to the tired, the poor, the 'huddled masses yearning to breathe free.' These are the people whom America has made her own."

In the United States Senate, a framework for immigration reform was proposed in late April, to improve the current, outdated system. Reform is needed now and we urge Congress to work in a bipartisan manner to introduce and enact comprehensive legislation. We have a broken system that must be fixed.

As we indicated in our 2007 and 2008 statements, we support the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' call for comprehensive legislation that would: recognize immigrant family stability and reunification

as priorities; insist that worker programs contain protection for U.S. and migrant workers; allow for an earned legalization program, that is realistic and fair, for undocumented persons already in this country; restore due process protections for immigrants; and address the economic, political, and social root causes of migration.

Let us work to build a society that respects, protects and upholds the dignity of all human beings, including newcomers to our state.

Archbishop John C. Nienstedt
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Bishop Paul D. Sirba
Diocese of Duluth

Archbishop Emeritus Harry J. Flynn
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Bishop John M. LeVoir
Diocese of New Ulm

Auxiliary Bishop Lee A. Piché
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Bishop John F. Kinney
Diocese of St. Cloud

Bishop Michael J. Hoeppner
Diocese of Crookston

Bishop John M. Quinn
Diocese of Winona

Bishop Emeritus Victor Balke
Diocese of Crookston

Bishop Emeritus Bernard J. Harrington
Diocese of Winona

2008 STATEMENT OF THE MINNESOTA CATHOLIC BISHOPS

“Welcoming Our Immigrant Sisters and Brothers”

December 12, 2008

Every day, throughout the world, tens of thousands of our sisters and brothers leave their homelands. Many flee in order to escape persecution, torture, famine and oppression. Others set out in search of greater opportunities for themselves and their families. Today we call to mind the immigrants and refugees who have come to Minnesota.

Most of us have immigrant ancestors. We have heard their stories at our tables and family gatherings. Such stories are a vital part of Minnesota’s history, and they reveal that we are all one family and responsible for one another. Today, we, the Roman Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, want to share our hope for:

- Newcomers journeying in search of greater opportunities for themselves and their families;
- Communities enriched by the many contributions of newcomers; and
- Advocates working for justice and reform.

In our pursuit of justice, we must work together to transform hearts, minds and communities.

Minnesota has welcomed many immigrants and refugees. However, we are alarmed by the anti-immigrant sentiment that is dividing our communities. Daily, we hear statements that contradict principles of Catholic social teaching. We witness the exploitation and isolation of our migrant, immigrant and refugee sisters and brothers. Mothers and fathers are forced to leave their children, spouses are separated from one another, and families are uprooted from their homes. Our communities suffer, too. Children lose friends and classmates, cities lose neighbors and businesses, and our churches lose parishioners.

Jesus calls us to welcome the stranger and reminds us that whatever we do to one of our brothers and sisters we do to him. We are called to recognize Christ in every newcomer and to respect the dignity of all human beings, regardless of their legal status. We must recognize that legal status is a human construct. People have a right to leave their countries of origin when persecution, famine or war threatens their lives and their rights to

work and worship. When people make the difficult decision to leave their homelands in search of a better life for themselves and their families, we are called to assist them.

Minnesotans have a long history of opening their arms to immigrants. We have welcomed many newcomers from Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America. Over 100 dialects are spoken in our communities. The Church's resettlement programs have helped Minnesota welcome one of the highest numbers of refugees in our country.

Though many immigrants have sought solace in Minnesota, their dignity and safety are often threatened. The harsh enforcement of federal immigration laws pushes many of our immigrant sisters and brothers into the shadows, and makes them more vulnerable to workplace intimidation and abuses. Fearing deportation and further exploitation, they are reluctant to report the injustices they endure.

Enforcing current law, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers have raided homes and businesses in various communities throughout Minnesota. As a result, many of our sisters and brothers were separated from their loved ones. Another serious problem facing our state is the human trafficking of both children and adults, many of whom are immigrants. During the last three years, more than 1,000 labor and sex trafficking victims have been identified.

While we recognize our nation's right to maintain secure borders, we oppose policies and practices that separate families and fuel suspicion, fear, intimidation, hatred and violence. Echoing our brother bishops across the country, we renew our call for comprehensive immigration reform and strategies to reduce global poverty. Just and equitable immigration policy, based on the principles of Catholic social teaching, would:

- recognize the inherent dignity of every human being;
- seek to reunite, stabilize and strengthen families;
- ease the path to citizenship for our undocumented sisters and brothers who are living in the United States;
- provide access to basic necessities;
- embody due process protections; and
- reflect an awareness of the social, political and economic causes of migration.

We invite all of our sisters and brothers to join us in promoting compassionate and just immigration reform of our broken immigration system. By embracing newcomers and sharing our abundance, we pray that justice will prevail.

Archbishop John C. Nienstedt
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Bishop Michael J. Hoeppner
Diocese of Crookston

Reverend James B. Bissonette
Diocese of Duluth, Diocesan Administrator

Bishop John M. LeVoir
Diocese of New Ulm

Bishop John F. Kinney
Diocese of Saint Cloud

Bishop Bernard J. Harrington
Diocese of Winona

2007 STATEMENT OF THE MINNESOTA CATHOLIC BISHOPS ON COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

June 6, 2007

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops of the state of Minnesota, call upon Minnesota's Congressional leaders to enact comprehensive immigration reform that is humane, just, and workable. At the heart of Catholic social teaching is the belief that all human beings are created in God's image and likeness – are children of God – and therefore possess sacred dignity and rights.

Comprehensive reform of United States' immigration policies is an urgent matter. Many immigrants to our country suffer exploitation and abuse, and some even die in their struggle to find work and reunite with their families. In Minnesota, we have recently witnessed suffering such as separation of families due to the enforcement of current immigration law. Our current policies do not allow enough people to enter legally to meet employment demands, nor do they provide reasonable and timely procedure for immigrants seeking legal residency, citizenship, or family reunification.

While we recognize that countries have a right to maintain secure borders, we don't believe this goal can be achieved apart from comprehensive immigration reform.

We support a comprehensive immigration reform bill that would include the following principles from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

- recognize immigrant family stability and reunification as priorities;
- insist that worker programs contain protection for U.S. and migrant workers;
- allow for an earned legalization program, one that is realistic and fair, for undocumented persons already in this country;
- restore due process protections for immigrants; and
- address the economic, political, and social root causes of migration.

We share the concerns that were recently voiced by the Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Bishop of Orlando, Florida in his testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law about the "compromise" bill that has been debated in the U.S. Senate. As it stands now, this bill would fail to provide temporary workers a path to permanent residency, thus creating an underclass of workers doomed to work in short-term, low-paid jobs with none of the benefits of citizenship. Of particular concern is this regrettable policy shift: family unity would no longer be the priority and cornerstone of the immigration system; instead, preference would be given to certain "merits," such as education level, and in many cases this would create long delays for family reunification.

We will continue to uphold the human dignity and rights of immigrants. We will continue to encourage our dioceses, parishes and organizations to advocate comprehensive reform. Remembering that most of our ancestors were immigrants to this nation, we call upon the citizens of Minnesota to open their hearts to our newest neighbors, to those who have come here seeking employment, security, and reunification with their family members. We urge all Minnesotans to engage in the process of comprehensive immigration reform by contacting your U.S. Senators and Representatives to voice your concerns. We look forward to working with lawmakers and immigration officials to welcome the stranger in the years to come.

Archbishop Harry Flynn
Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Coadjutor Archbishop John Nienstedt
*Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis/
Diocese of New Ulm*

Bishop Richard Pates
Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Bishop Victor Balke
Diocese of Crookston

Bishop Dennis Schnurr
Diocese of Duluth

Bishop John Kinney
Diocese of St. Cloud

Bishop Bernard Harrington
Diocese of Winona

LITURGY GUIDE



While the Mass is truly divine, a gift from God, it also includes many human elements, customs and traditions of various cultures that have become part of the Eucharistic celebration. Through the process of inculturation, Mother Church has admitted practices unique to particular cultures into the liturgy itself, "so long as they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit." (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37)

Many of our parishes today are made up of people from all over the world and multiple cultural backgrounds. A great way to remind the community that we are all truly one in Christ's body is to incorporate into the liturgy some of the music, symbols, signs and languages of our immigrant, migrant and refugee sisters and brothers.

Pope John Paul II stated that "Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community." (*Redemptoris Missio*, 52) Embracing all members of our parish community strengthens our faith and makes us more aware that we are one in Christ. Please use this *Liturgy Guide* to enrich your worship celebration of Minnesota Statewide Immigration Sunday in a manner than best reflects the worship needs of your parish.

PLANNING SUGGESTIONS

When preparing the liturgy for Minnesota Statewide Immigration Sunday:

- promote the active participation of all people in your parish community;
- invite leaders of ethnic groups into the Minnesota Statewide Immigration Sunday planning process;
- know and understand the cultural backgrounds of your parishioners; and
- include a variety of languages.

Ways to include a variety of languages in your worship celebration:

Music
Responses to General Intercessions
Lord's Prayer
Sign of Peace

READINGS

First Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-6

Rise up in splendor! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; But upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: Your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, For the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; All from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3: 2-3a, 5-6

If, as I suppose, you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, which was not made known to human beings in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

SUGGESTED GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

For immigrants, migrants, refugees, and all newcomers, that they may be welcomed in our parish.

For our immigrant and refugee sisters and brothers, that they may remain true to all that is good in their rich traditions and heritage, and help to build harmonious communities wherever they live.

For Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop Nienstedt, Bishop _____, priests, deacons, women religious, and missionaries, that they may continue to lead, guide and support the solicitude of the Church towards immigrants and vulnerable populations.

For migrants, refugees and strangers in our community, that they may find hope in our concern for justice and feel the warmth of our love.

For our community gathered here today to celebrate our unity in Christ, that we may come to a greater understanding and acceptance of our differences.

For unaccompanied migrant children, that they may be protected from all harm and reunited with loving families.

For migrant workers, that they may work in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide.

For an end to the violence and poverty that displace so many of our sisters and brothers from their homes and homelands.

For our leaders, that they may implement policies that allow for safe migration, just migrant working conditions, and an end to the detention of asylum seekers, while protecting our national safety.

MUSIC

Here are some songs that would be fitting in keeping with the celebration of Statewide Immigration Sunday. Choosing one or two to use in the liturgy would be appropriate.

Gathering Song

- ***Sing a New Church***, Nettleton, OCP Publications
- ***Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo/We Are the Body of Christ***, Jaime Cortez, OCP Publications
- ***O Sanctissima/O Most Virtuous***
—A hymn to the Virgin Mary, often sung around Christmas time.

Responsorial Psalm

- ***Every Nation on Earth (Ps. 72)***, Michael Joncas, GIA Publications
- ***Lord, Every Nation***, Jesse Manibusan, OCP Publications

Alleluia

- ***Celtic Alleluia***, Fintan O'Carroll and Christopher Walker: *Alternative verse for the Feast of the Epiphany*:

A holy day has dawned.
Adore the Lord, you nations,
for today a light
has come on the earth.

Preparation of the Gifts

- ***Bread of Life, Hope for the World***, Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications
- ***Let Us Be Bread***, Thomas J. Porter, GIA Publications, Inc.
- ***Let Us Break Bread Together***, Spiritual, GIA Publications, Inc.
- ***The Lord is My Light***, Christopher Walker, OCP Publications
- ***Ubi Caritas/Where Love Is***
—This refrain dates from at least the early Medieval period, and possibly goes back to even the ancient church.

Eucharistic Song

- ***Cuando Partimos el Pan del Señor/In the Breaking of the Bread***, Bob Hurd and Michael Downey, OCP
- ***Here I Am, Lord***, Dan Schutte, OCP Publications
- ***Lead Us to Your Table***, Tom Tomaszek and Steve Angrisano, OCP Publications
- ***One Bread, One Body***, John Foley, S.J., OCP Publications
- ***Ven al Banquete/Come to the Feast***, Bob Hurd, OCP Publications
- ***Adoro te Devote/I Devoutly Adore You***
—A hymn about the Eucharist by St. Thomas Aquinas.
- ***Panis Angelicum/Bread of Angels***
—Another hymn by St. Thomas Aquinas.

Recessional

- ***Christ, Be Our Light***, Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications
- ***City of God***, Dan Schutte, OCP Publications
- ***Go Light Your World***, Chris Rice, ASCAP
- ***Lead Me Lord, John Becker***, OCP Publications
- ***Malo! Malo! Thanks Be to God***, Jessie Manibusan, OCP Publications
- ***Siyahamba/We Are Marching***, South African, Walton Music Corporation
- ***We Are Called to Serve***, Julie and Tim Smith, Resource Publications

Note: A few of the above hymns are in Latin. As an international institution, the Church is no stranger to bridging cultural divides. At international gatherings such as Papal Masses, Beatifications and World Youth Days, there are hundreds of languages spoken by the pilgrims who attend. In a gesture of impartiality and of unity, the Church chooses to use Latin, a language that is not spoken in any country today but is common to the Church worldwide. The ancient language is in fact the official tongue of the Church, and it unifies the diverse crowds, emphasizing the solidarity of the global Church. Perhaps you will want to incorporate a Latin song or two into your parish's Mass to recall the universal nature of the Church.

READING REFLECTIONS



First Reading: *Isaiah 60:1-6*

This text from Isaiah speaks of the new Jerusalem - a time and a place where the glory of the Lord shines. God's presence within this city brings an extraordinary illumination, and nations are drawn to this light. This new Jerusalem is not one nation or one city. Rather, it is any place and any people that are full of the knowledge of the Lord and have learned "to walk by your light." No nation can claim this title, and no people have yet learned what it means to live in right relationship with God, with one another, and with all of God's creation. Yet the images and the movements of this text point to ways in which we as a people – as a nation – can walk in God's paths; thereby letting the Lord's light shine through us.

Isaiah's reference to nations, and to sons and daughters coming from afar, can lead us to think of people coming to our country today with a similar hope. They come not because our country is the new Jerusalem – far from it. They come because they see hope for a better life.

Today in the United States there are 37 million foreign-born residents: some are naturalized citizens; others are moving along the path to citizenship; some are here as students; most are here for employment reasons. Among the immigrant laborers are a large number of undocumented workers.

Whatever their legal status, the vast majority of immigrants in the United States are here because they seek a better life for themselves and their families – not a life of luxury and not a life dependent upon handouts, but a livelihood improved by the prospects of steady work. Their decision to leave their homelands in search on employment is what Pope Benedict XVI called in *Spe Salvi* an act of hope: an action based upon their belief that a better life, a life more befitting human dignity, is possible.

Catholic social teaching regarding immigration offers several points worth considering if we, or any nation, aspire to reflect the new Jerusalem. This teaching begins by acknowledging that all people have the right to have their basic needs met in their homeland. When it is not possible to fulfill those needs at home, people have the right to emigrate to other lands in search of the work they need. This teaching also upholds the right of sovereign nations to control their borders, but such efforts must promote the common good of the universal human family.

For that reason it is important for every nation to review and, when necessary, reform its immigration policies and enforcement practices. In this country, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops urges a comprehensive reform of our immigration policies that includes: expanded opportunities to reunify families, a temporary worker program, and an earned legalization program for undocumented immigrants.

Isaiah and other prophets in the Old Testament frequently remind the Hebrew people that they must show particular love and care for the widows, the orphans and the strangers. To be in right

relationship with their God required that they show mercy and practical assistance to the poor and vulnerable persons among them. At that time and in that place these were the widows, the orphans and the strangers.

If the glory of the Lord is ever to shine among us, one of the challenges we must address in our society is that of helping the widows, the orphans and the strangers of our day. Ironically, we can be guided in this task by the very immigrants we are called to help. Isaiah states: *Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.* (Isaiah 60:5) The wealth of nations comes to us through the immigrants. They contribute enormously to our economy. Their many customs, languages, and lifestyle enrich our culture beyond measure. Their high regard for the religious and the spiritual is a humbling lesson for us on how to walk in God's paths.

Second Reading: *Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6*

From his prison cell, St. Paul writes to the Christian community at Ephesus about the mystery that has been made known to him by the Spirit: that through the Gospel the gentiles are heirs with Israel, members together in the one body and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus. It is this mystery that had Paul writing earlier to the Christians at Galatia: *there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* (Gal. 3:28)

The power of this message is that as members of Christ's body we all share in Christ's promise of a restored relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. Our sharing in the promise of salvation is a primary source of our dignity as human beings. It is why we need to live as a people redeemed, as a people marked by a sacred dignity. It is why we need to help other people realize that dignity in which all have a right to partake.

The Second Vatican Council reminded us that our sharing in Christ Jesus' promise of salvation is no cause for failing to respond to peoples' needs in this life. In the Council's words, ". . . the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family . . . a body which already is a foreshadowing of the life that is to come." Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, no. 39.

What a beautiful way of calling us to help improve the lives of people who struggle to find that dignified life. Of particular relevance here are the millions of people who leave their homelands to find a better life in ours. These are people whose goal is not a life of luxury and ease, but a simple life in which their hard work can earn for them a reasonably decent life and the hope of a better life for their children. This is the hope that lead our own ancestors to America.

The experience of many immigrants in our country is evidence that not all of God's children have attained the dignified life that is rightfully theirs. They remind us as well how far we as a church have to go in welcoming the stranger among us. As St. Paul writes, we are one body, one church, and no one should feel like a stranger in this church. To be church is to recognize our unity in Christ. It is to

welcome and serve the newest member whoever she is, wherever he comes from, whatever their legal status.

If we can do that, then we will stand with our sisters and brothers when their immigrant status leads to the experience of prejudice and discrimination. If we can be church as St. Paul writes, then we will support undocumented workers when raids by immigration authorities separate families, terrorize children, and sow fear and suspicion in immigrant communities. If we are that church which celebrates the good news that everyone shares in the promise of Christ Jesus, then we will not tolerate words or actions or national policies that dishonor and hurt immigrants in our country.

Then, too, we will help our nation reform its immigration policies to meet the economic and security needs of our country and to meet the employment and family stability needs of immigrants. Anything less is a failure to respond to people in need: *Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.* (Mt. 25:40) Anything less is a failure to recognize that within our immigrant communities there *grows the body of a new human family . . . a body which already is a foreshadowing of the life that is to come.* Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, no. 39.

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

The second chapter of Matthew's Gospel is filled with motion, with people on the move. Wise men from the East arrive in Jerusalem asking where the newborn king of the Jews might be found. King Herod sends them to Bethlehem to find the child. After locating the child and offering their gifts, the wise men take a different road to their own country in order to avoid Herod. Then, in the verse immediately following this reading, an angel of the Lord warns Joseph to flee with the infant child and his mother to Egypt – where the Holy Family live as refugees until Herod's death allows them to return to their homeland, Israel.

This story of the visit of the wise men leading to the eventual flight of the Holy Family into Egypt is one that too many of God's children can recognize as their own. Today, there are approximately 16 million refugees throughout the world – people who have had to flee their homeland because of unending war, a fear of persecution, or the threat of death. These are people whose journey was not of their choosing but one day became a requirement for their continued living.

We know so well the story of the three kings, the three wise men who came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Some of our favorite Christmas carols celebrate this event, as do most Christmas pageants in Catholic elementary schools. This is the story of today's Gospel reading, Matthew 2:1-12.

By contrast we rarely think about what comes next in verse 13: Joseph, Mary and their infant son fleeing for their lives, becoming refugees in Egypt. Yet this is the story of countless people fleeing the suffering and violence of such places as Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, the Congo, Chad, Somalia and Sudan.

Sadly, a very small percentage of these refugees are welcomed into the United States. During the ten year period preceding 9/11 refugee admissions to the United States averaged more than 91,000

annually. Today the average has dropped to 50,000 – less than one percent of the total number of global refugees.

The story of the Holy Family's sojourn in Egypt also is the story of contemporary immigrants in general. Every year millions of people need to leave their native countries not only as refugees but also as persons seeking jobs that will allow them and their families to live a dignified life. Employment is the single greatest reason for immigrants entering the United States.

Their journey daily becomes more hazardous as this nation's immigration reform has been reduced to workplace raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) as well as by increased funding to control our southern border. A 7,000 mile fence now forces immigrants to wander farther into and through the deadly deserts of the Southwest.

Long before Matthew wrote about Joseph and Mary fleeing with their child into Egypt, another story was told about how all of us should respond to immigrants. The Hebrew prophets spoke of the widows, the orphans and the strangers – the people of that culture who were most vulnerable and most in need of help. The Torah itself provided the explanation for why the Hebrew people – and we – must treat with compassion the refugee and every immigrant: *You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.* (Leviticus 19:34)

We today, so long after receiving the Law and the Prophets, could read this text in a profoundly new way: ***We shall treat the refugee and all immigrants who reside among us no differently than the neighbors born in this country; we shall have the same love for them as for ourselves; for our Lord Jesus also was once a refugee and an immigrant.***