

**THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD & USA NATIONAL MIGRATION WEEK JAN. 3<sup>RD</sup>, 021.**

Remembering, as we do in the Christmas season, that the Son of God “Migrated” from heaven to live among us and that Jesus, Mary and Joseph were themselves refugees in the land of Egypt, leads us to reflect on the circumstances confronting migrants, including immigrants, refugees, children and victims and survivors of human trafficking.

It could be very interesting to hear their story.

Why do they come? What are they seeking? As Catholics, what does Jesus ask of us in terms of refugees?

Both the Old and New Testament communicate compelling stories of refugees forced to flee their native countries because of oppression. Exodus tells us the story of the chosen people, Israel, who became victims of slavery in Egypt. Their experience was so painful and frightening that God ordered His people for all time to help those who are new to a place and in need of special care (Leviticus 19:33-4).

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.

Jesus reinforces the O.T command to love and care for the stranger, when he says: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcome me (Mt. 25:35). The Apostle Paul asserts the absolute equality of all people and the value of the refugee when he says: “Before God: there is neither Jew nor Greek.... for we are all one in Christ” (Gal: 3:28).

Today, we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany and Immigration Sunday. We remember the journey of the Magi who followed a light in the sky, and found the light of the world. They followed that light wherever it took them, no matter how far it was from their homeland. They were not disappointed. In fact, they were “Overjoyed” as it says in the story, in awe of the newborn king. And something tells me they were never the same.

When the three kings made their long journey to discover the Christ child, they were taking a risk, in hopes of having a better life. They had gifts to offer our Lord. It is important on Immigration Sunday, to remember that the Immigrants and refugees who come to our country also have many gifts to offer. It is our responsibility to welcome them into our midst.

When we welcome our Immigrant sisters and brothers, we welcome Christ Himself, for in the faces 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 (Lk. 24:13-15) became witnesses to the Truth by welcoming the stranger: Christ.