

Forced like Jesus Christ to Flee

Call to Worship

Leader God of welcome,
 God of protection,
 We praise you and thank you for your gifts.

As we reflect on the lives of those displaced peoples who endure trying journeys to escape oppression, persecution and violence, we ask that the power of your Holy Spirit be fully alive within us. May your love give us the humility to welcome, protect, promote and integrate these brothers and sisters into the folds of our community.

Gospel Matthew 2:13-15

Reader 1 A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

The Escape to Egypt

Now after [the wisemen] 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.”

All The Gospel of the Lord
 Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection

Reader 2 Imagine them — Mary and Joseph and what they had been through. By order of the state, they journeyed to Bethlehem to be counted. Arriving there and finding no room, their child was born in a stable. Strangely, shepherds and angels attend the birth and rich wise men came from far away bearing gifts. An angel appears in a dream telling them to run, flee to Egypt for their child is in danger.

Imagine them — mothers and fathers, daughters and sons — the immigrants and refugees across the world and what they have been through. In the face of failed, violent and corrupt governments, they flee to places with little room and cold welcomes. Strange languages, new customs and rules, they are told to journey on again and again. Still not out of danger, they move time and again to find a new home.

When we draw near to our migrant and refugee sisters and brothers, we draw near to Mary and Joseph. When we protect and serve displaced children, we are doing so for the Christ child in our midst.

We remember the six actions of relationship that Pope Francis calls us to in care of the migrant and refugees among us. Which of these are you called to today? What will you do for the Holy Family even as they cross into our borders seeking safety and shelter?

Strive to know in order to understand.
Strive to be close in order to serve.
Strive to listen in order to be reconciled.
Strive to share in order to grow.
Strive to be involved in order to promote.
Strive to cooperate in order to build.

Intersessions

Leader The response to our intercessions is, *Lord protect them*

God, our father, watch over the men and boys who leave their homes in search of safety, opportunity and welcome. Guide their feet to safe harbors. Let them feel your presence as they travel. May they know themselves to be your cherished sons.

May they find in us safe shelters for their souls and dreams. We pray,
Lord, protect them.

God, our mother, watch over the women and girls who leave their homes behind in search of lives of security and hope. Bring them to safety; keep them from harm. Let them feel your presence as they travel, May they know themselves to be your cherished daughters in dignity and grace.

May they find in us safe shelters for their souls and dreams. We pray,
Lord, protect them.

Christ Jesus, refugee child, protect and keep from harm all babies and children who, like you, are carried in their parent's arms to safety. Let them grow knowing you are close to them, having been a migrant yourself.

May they find in us safe shelters for their souls and dreams. We pray,
Lord, protect them.

Closing Prayer

Leader As we bring our prayer to a close, let us pray that God gives us strength and courage for the work ahead.

Reader 1 May we build bridges of empathy and compassion, that we might
Know their stories, to understand them ...
Draw near to them, to better serve them ...
Listen closely to them, to be reconciled with them ...

Reader 2 May we work together in harmony, that we might
Grow together, to better share with one another ...
Involve one another, to recognize our shared responsibility for redemption ...
Cooperate, to make our shared home more reflective of God's Kingdom ...

Leader May the love and forgiveness of our God guide us each day as we journey together in Christ's name, and may the grace of the Holy Family offer support and protection to migrants and refugees across the world.

All Amen.