

December Prayer

The Dignity of All Persons

Opening Song: O Come O Come Emmanuel (1st verse in the beginning and 1 verse at the end)

Introduction: As we begin this Advent/Christmas season, we ask for ears to hear the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor. Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* tells us they are one and the same cry. We witness the devastation of our Earth and the tragic rise in the number of migrants seeking to flee from the growing poverty caused by environmental degradation and oppressive governments or unruly gangs who make it impossible for families to live in peace with their basic human needs met.

Opening Prayer: May Jesus' message of peace, welcome, and hospitality help us overcome our fears so that we defend those who are weak and the poor and the stranger and our Earth. Open our eyes so that we see where love and hope and faith are needed and the strength in our legs to bring them to the places they are needed. (Alternate sides on the following)



May we see that as God comes into our lives through the "other," we will recognize the face of God who seeks our hospitality.

May we see our response coming from a broken heart rather than political or economic concerns.

May we consider all people as our neighbors—even those whom society vilifies.

May we show that we are neighbors when we stand with those who seek sanctuary and inclusion.

May we remember that we are all aliens and strangers and that we are called to show radical hospitality to all as it was shown to us.

May we truly celebrate this season of Advent and prepare for Christmas by giving food to the hungry, drink to those who are thirsty, and welcome to the stranger (from Matthew 25:35)

Prayer: Christ is our peace and through him may we help build "one family of brothers and sisters in our diverse societies acting justly, loving tenderly, and walking humbly with God." We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading 1: Luke 2:1-7 and Matthew 2:13-18

Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger because there was no room in the hostel....After the Magi were gone, God's angel showed up in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him." Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt until Herod's death.

Reflection: Everyday people around the world make the difficult decision to leave their countries in search of safety and better lives. Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to protect the child Jesus. Those heading to our border are asylum seekers trying to cross our border so they can be protected and given a chance to live with human dignity.

Thousands of children and families from Central America have fled extreme danger—murder, kidnapping, violence against women, and forced recruitment by gangs. Those arriving at the U.S. border are being depicted as “illegal immigrants” but in reality, crossing an international border for asylum is not illegal and an asylum seeker’s case must be heard, according to U.S. and international law.



Advent calls us to HOPE. These are men, women, and children who are filled with hope in what seems a hopeless situation. They trust in the goodness of the American people whose values call us to welcome the immigrant. We are called to uphold the dignity of every person. Pope Francis reminds us in *Laudato Si* (17) that, as Christians, we are called to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a “global scale.”

Some thoughts to contemplate during this Holy Season:

Help us to remember that when we speak of immigrants and refugees, we speak of Christ.

How do I relate to persons from different nations and cultures?

Prayer: God of light, the daylight shortens as the winter solstice approaches. We await the coming of the Saviour whose light will never darken. Grant us during this Advent and winter nourishing rains and peaceful snowfalls to replenish the earth’s aquifers, lakes, and rivers. Restore the land so it will produce bountiful harvests for all your creatures. Then rushing rivers, glaciers, and waterfalls will join in praising your name at the coming of spring.

~ adapted from *Justice for Immigrants, “Prayer and Liturgy Suggestions,”* www.justiceforimmigrants.org/ParishKit/LiturgyPrayerSuggestions.pdf Posted on Acts of Faith.
http://actsofffaith.org/resources/downloads/Year_A/09%20Immigration_final.pdf

*Reflection and other portions were adapted from CAPSA (Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum)

