

Advent Service: Journeys of Struggle, Journeys of Hope

Welcome / Bienvenido

Music / Música : *Jesus was a refugee*

Opening Prayer / Oración : Gary Harder

First Reading / Primera Lectura : Luke 2: 1-7

“At that time Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman Empire. When this first census took place, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. Everyone, then, went to register himself, each to his own home town. Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was a descendant of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in the inn.”

This fall, Canada carried out its own census. However, unlike Mary and Joseph, we modern day census participants were not required to travel back to our home town in order to be registered. Rather we were asked to register ourselves in the town or city that we now call home. People with origins in all parts of the globe registered themselves and were counted in the Canadian census. Let us hear the voices of some of those who were counted:

- Gary
- Javier
- Marina

For some of us in this city, it is not so easy to come forward to be counted:

- Gabriela

Second Reading / Segunda Lectura : Mateo 2: 1-12

“Habiendo nacido Jesús en Belén de Judá, durante el reinado de Herodes, vinieron unos Magos de Oriente a Jerusalén, y preguntaron: “¿Dónde está el rey de los judíos que ha nacido?, porque hemos visto su estrella en Oriente y venimos a adorarlo.” Herodes y todo Jerusalén quedaron muy intranquilos por la noticia. Reunió a todos los sacerdotes principales y a los maestros de la Ley para preguntarles dónde debía nacer el Cristo. Ellos le contestaron que en Belén de Judá, ya que así lo anunció el profeta que escribió: “Belén en la tierra de Judá, tú no eres el más pequeño entre los principales pueblos de Judá, porque de tí saldrá un jefe, el pastor de mi pueblo, Israel.” Herodes, entonces, llamó privadamente a los magos para saber la fecha exacta en que se les había aparecido la estrella. Encaminándolos a Belén les dijo: “Vayan y averigüen bien lo que se refiere a este niño. Cuando lo hayan encontrado avísenme para ir yo también a adorarlo.” Después de esta entrevista, los magos prosiguieron su camino. La estrella que habían visto en Oriente iba delante de ellos, hasta que se paró sobre el lugar en que estaba el niño. Al ver la estrella se alegraron mucho, y, habiendo entrado en la casa, hallaron al niño que estaba con María, su madre. Se postraron para adorarlo y, abriendo sus cofres, le ofrecieron regalos: oro, incienso, y mirra. Luego regresaron a su país por otro camino, porque se les avisó en sueños que no volvieron donde Herodes.”

The Magi came from afar, bearing gifts for the newborn king. Today’s travelers from afar also come bearing gifts. They bring with them courage, convictions and a commitment to

work hard for the betterment of their family and their new society. Today, Canada relies on newcomers to maintain its birthrate and its labour force. Let us hear of some of the gifts brought to Canada over generations of migration:

- Gary
- Javier
- Marina

Sometimes, our gifts are not recognized or received. King Herod did not welcome the Magi and their gifts. Many newcomers to Canada struggle with non-recognition of the credentials and skills that they bring with them. Instead, they are asked for Canadian diplomas, and Canadian experience. Others, without a work permit, face even more serious obstacles to presenting their gifts.

- Gabriela

Music / Música : Toda la tierra

Reflection / Reflexión: Journeys of Struggle, Journeys of Hope

Music / Música : Somos pueblo que camina

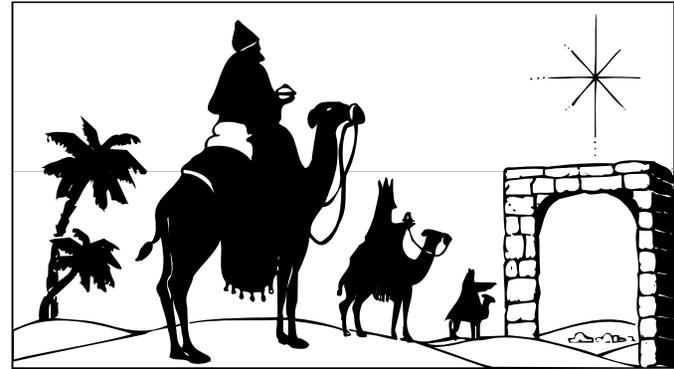
Eucharist / Eucharistia

Closing prayer / Oración: Adolfo Puricelli

***Benediction:** Peace upon your journey. Walk with each other, sharing your struggles and your hopes. Give of your gifts to your fellow travelers, knowing that each of you is counted in God's book of life. Amen.*

Journeys of Struggle

Journeys of Hope



Jornadas de Dificultad

Jornadas de Esperanza

December 20, 2006

20 de diciembre, 2006

A joint service of the Mennonite New Life Centre, the New Life Church and Toronto United Mennonite Church

Un servicio compartido de El Centro Nueva Vida, la Iglesia Menonita Nueva Vida y la Toronto United Mennonite Church.

Advent Reflection:
Journeys of Struggle, Journeys of Hope
Mennonite New Life Church
December 20, 2006

This evening, we have been reflecting on the many journeys to be found within the Christmas story: the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, the journey of the Magi in search of Jesus, and the flight of Mary, Joseph and the child Jesus into Egypt. Each of these journeys is marked by a sense of vulnerability and danger. Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem at the command of a conquering emperor. After registering their names in the imperial census, they learn that the local ruler, King Herod, is plotting to kill their son. They have no choice but to flee to Egypt. Everywhere, Mary and Joseph are faced with closed doors, exclusion. First, there was no room for them in the inn. Now, there is no room anywhere in his native land for a boy destined to be a leader of his people.

Vulnerability, danger, exclusion. These words continue to describe many of our modern day stories of migration. Over generations, refugees and migrants have fled persecution and poverty, danger and deprivation, to seek a new life in Canada. These journeys have been marked by struggle – the struggle for status and recognition, a room in the inn. Too often, migrants and travellers are given only a second-class place in society. They are looked at with suspicion, their skills and gifts unrecognized and unrewarded. The most vulnerable are granted only temporary status in Canada, or no legal status at all. Canada's immigration points system favors those who have professional skills and money to invest. These newcomers are granted permanent residence status. Meanwhile, manual labourers are channeled into temporary work programs or find themselves in an undocumented situation, where they are often exploited and abused, with little access to services and supports. Special consideration and status is given to refugees, but not everyone's experience of suffering is deemed to fit the refugee definition.

What keeps people moving through all these struggles? In lonely desert nights, the Magi found comfort in their star, the promise of a new king. In exile in Egypt, Mary held on to her determination to

provide a future for her child, Jesus. Similarly, today's migrants and refugees are propelled by hopes and dreams – a new political reality, a better future for their children.

December is a key moment to celebrate the hopes and dreams of migrants – and to work to bring those dreams to fruition. In 1997, Filipino and Asian migrant organizations began to celebrate December 18 as the International Day of Solidarity with Migrants. This date was chosen because it was on December 18, 1990 that the UN adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrants and Members of their Families. The Migrant Workers Convention states that receiving countries have a responsibility to offer basic rights and protections to migrants, even if they do not fit the refugee definition or qualify for immigration. The Convention guarantees rights to fair pay and safe working conditions, emergency medical care, and education for children – regardless of immigration status.

Unfortunately, Canada has not yet signed this Convention. In fact, the only countries that have signed are sending countries, not receiving ones. Tonight, we'd like to invite you to sign a letter asking the Minister of Immigration, Monte Solberg, to work for Canada to sign the Migrant Worker's Convention and implement policy changes to reduce the vulnerability of undocumented immigrants. You will find copies of this letter, as well as a longer advocacy document developed by the New Life Centre, on the table at the back.

Please take the time to read the letter and add your signature as a sign of solidarity and hope. We've heard tonight of the many gifts that migrants, refugees and immigrants bring to our country – practical and professional gifts, as well as the more intangible gifts of courage, convictions and culture. These precious gifts are the incense, gold and myrrh laid before us this Christmas. Let us open our hearts to receive the gifts of others, and work for a Canada that honours and welcomes the gifts of all.

Tanya Chute Molina