

December 19, 2018

Call to Prayer

God of our Advents, once again we enter this season of waiting when we cry out “Come, come Lord Jesus.” We wait for so many things, but deep within our hearts, we wait for the coming of your kingdom of peace and justice, of compassion and love for all peoples.

God of all peoples, today, we pray for all those who fan the flames of fear and discrimination; for those who cannot see the gift that immigrants are to our communities. May they be touched with Your divine wisdom, compassion, and justice.

Reading

Nevertheless various forms of discrimination continually reappear – ethnic cultural, religious, political and so on. In fact, human rights are still too often disregarded, if not scoffed at, or else they receive only formal recognition. In many cases legislation does not keep up with real situations. Legislation is necessary, but it is not sufficient for setting up true relationships of justice and equity. In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others. If, beyond legal rules, there is really no deeper feeling of respect for and service to others, then even equality before the law can serve as an alibi for flagrant discrimination, continued exploitation and actual contempt. Without a renewed education in solidarity, an overemphasis of equality can give rise to an individualism in which each one claims [his or her] own rights without wishing to be answerable for the common good. In this field, everyone sees the highly important contribution of the Christian spirit, which moreover answers [a person’s] yearning to be loved. “Love for [human beings], the prime value of the earthly order” ensures the conditions for peace, both social peace and international peace, by affirming our universal brotherhood. – *Octogesima Adveniens*, 23

Prayer

Who will listen to the cries of the poor –
To the hopes and needs of those seeking a better life?

Who will listen if we don’t?

Who will speak so their voices will be heard –
So the wisdom and aspirations of migrant peoples will be heeded?

Who will speak if we don’t?

Who will see Christ in our brothers and sisters – in those who reveal new and unique aspects of God’s love as they seek to make a home with us?

Who will see Christ if we don’t?

Who will be the hands and feet of Christ – the hands that heal and nurture, and the feet that “bring good news?”

Who will be Love if we aren’t?

Story (Optional)

Shania from Afghanistan

I was only three years old when my parents were put in a refugee detention center in the United States. Rather than moving to a family facility in Texas, my parents left me with family that had already made it safely to



America. I was too young to remember the process, but I have been told that it took a lot of time and it was hard because we didn't know what was happening. I know there were a lot of background checks, which were difficult and time consuming but necessary as a prevention mechanism. I'm glad government reports show the attention to detail involved because I think that's the point: to make sure everyone feels safe. I do remember feeling confused for a long time- not knowing when we would finally be safe. The first few months were challenging for my parents. They weren't able to be with me and they had to answer a lot of questions in front of a lot of people over and over. I don't think people understood that they needed help: a place to live, a way to support themselves and their young child, or that they were scared. They needed hope. They went from one chaotic and scary experience to another. This has affected me my entire life - I chose to devote my professional life to helping others. I volunteered and worked at shelters and crisis centers in high school and college, worked for child welfare systems and foster care providers, and with the federal government to help people get settled. It's hard being a refugee and an immigrant because there are mixed emotions - you feel lucky for being safe and having all of these opportunities, but you also experience rejection and discrimination. It has forced me to reevaluate my culture and identity.

(Source: <http://iamamigrant.org/stories/united-states/shania>)

Time for Reflection/Sharing

Consider listening to [Rune of Hospitality](#) as you reflect. Click the link to listen. (See Day 1 for lyrics.)

Suggested Action

Today, resolve to counter any discriminatory, derogatory, or misinformed remarks concerning immigrant people with the truth of their dignity and circumstances.

Closing Prayer

God of the journey, God of the traveler, draw near to us. Fill us with the Spirit's desire to shape a future full of hope for our brothers and sisters who are strangers in this land. Give us the courage to open the doors of our hearts and our country to our neighbors, and give us the grace to build a society of justice and compassion.

We pray for our legislators, as they craft new immigration legislation – may they find the wisdom and courage to enact policies that do justice for our country and for those who would migrate here.

Move us to new frontiers as we remember how you crossed every border between Divinity and humanity to make your home with us. Remind us of Blessed Theresa and all those who gave all they had so that the immigrants in America might have better lives. Move us to new frontiers, for we are all migrants journeying with you and one another toward your Kingdom.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

