



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF}MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR JANUARY 6, 2019

Dear friends in the Word Made Flesh,

This week each year, the universal Church turns its attention to the needs of migrants, refugees, exiles and immigrants around the world.

The scripture readings for the season make the observance of Migration Week especially appropriate. The Christmas gospel itself, of course, is the story of a woman with child and her husband uprooted from their home by decree of an occupying power, who find themselves unwelcome and without shelter in an unfamiliar city. Shortly after the child's birth, the same family become refugees in Egypt—again in a land where their language is not spoken and where they would receive the scorn and rejection that sinful societies reserve for the stranger and immigrant.

From the beginning of salvation history, care and protection of the stranger has been among God's first injunctions to his people. Leviticus articulates a commandment repeated throughout the Hebrew scriptures: "When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien ... no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (19:33-34). And the New Testament identifies the stranger we are called to serve with the very person of Christ: "For I was a stranger and you welcomed me..." (Mt 25:35).

These last years have been a very distressing time for those of us who embrace this age-old teaching. While I do not expect every politician and pundit to be guided by biblical morality or Church teaching on immigration reform, it is deeply saddening to hear words of fear and hatred from within the Catholic community itself.

I hope it need not be repeated: All of God's people will continue to find a welcome at IHM—with immigrants and strangers receiving the special welcome demanded of us by the scriptures and our Catholic tradition. For they are, wherever their origin and whatever their language and culture, indeed sisters and brothers to us.

Christmas blessings to you all,