



# IMMACULATE HEART<sup>OF</sup> MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

## A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR JANUARY 5, 2020

Dear friends in the Word Made Flesh,

The readings from Sacred Scripture at Mass this time of year challenge us to deepen our awareness of the needs of refugees, displaced persons, migrants and exiles around the world—and of immigrants in our own land.

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 alien occupying power, who find themselves un-welcome and without shelter in an unfamiliar city. Shortly after the child's birth, the same family find themselves 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 for and protection of the stranger have been among God's first injunctions to his people. The book of 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 who resides with you 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 hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me..." (Matthew 25:35).

I hope it goes without saying that, while our nation struggles with the moral imperative to accomplish comprehensive immigration reform ([justiceforimmigrants.org](http://justiceforimmigrants.org)), all God's people will continue to find a Christ-like welcome at IHM—with those in need finding the preferential welcome demanded by the scriptures and our Catholic tradition. For they are, wherever their origin and whatever their language, indeed sisters and brothers to us.

Your brother in Christ's word and work,