

Winter Prayer



A place to call home...

One of the most basic human needs is to have a place of refuge – a place where the feelings of safety, comfort and security are present. In our world today, we can often forget the value of these life-giving gifts. For most of us our daily lives are devoid of fear of persecution, intimidation, violence isolation, and death. In many places in the world today, however, people have been forced to flee their own countries, severing themselves from family and friends, facing an uncertain future.

Jesus himself reminds us to welcome strangers into our land, offering healing with actions of love and care. Matthew 25. Any time we welcome strangers we welcome Jesus himself.

Pope Francis implores all Christians to, “Love their neighbour as themselves by being firmly committed to building a more just world in which everyone has access to the goods of the earth and where fundamental rights and dignity are guaranteed to all.” “As Christians we cannot remain insensitive, our hearts deadened, before the misery of so many innocent people. We must not fail to weep. We must not fail to respond.” Pope Francis 2019, Vatican Dispatch

He underlined the moral imperative to welcome and give hospitality to all discarded people. Pope Francis entrusts all migrants, refugees, together with those who live on the peripheries of our world and those who have chosen to share their journey, to the eternal love of Mary, Our Lady of the Way.

This month's prayer offers an opportunity to pray for those who are desperately seeking refuge and to awaken in oneself an awareness of their calls for help.

Lighting a candle

Sit quietly, settling into stillness. Let the rhythm of your breathing guide you.



Matthew 2:1-3;13-15;19-23

After Jesus' birth- which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod – astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage." At this news Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him." Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they left that night for Egypt. They stayed there until the death of Herod, to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I have called my Own."

After Herod's death, the angel of God appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt with the command, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and set out for the land of Israel. Those who had designs on the life of the child are dead."

Joseph got up, awakened Jesus and Mary, and they returned to the land of Israel. Joseph heard, however, that Archelaus had succeeded Herod as ruler of Judea, and Joseph was afraid to go back there. Instead, because of a warning received by Joseph in a dream, the family went to the region of Galilee. There they settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way, what was said through the prophets was fulfilled: "He will be called a Nazarene." Inclusive Bible

Reflection

Place yourself in this story. Are your thoughts and actions indicative of the Magi?... Herod?... or Joseph, as the head of the Holy family?

When have I shown a Joseph-like protection of those who are vulnerable?

What is our Pope calling us to do?

How can we be people of hope in an increasingly hopeless world?

In the reading we see a family fleeing to a foreign country out of fear of persecution. Can you find modern examples of this situation?



Responding

We pray that like Joseph we relieve suffering and bring hope to those around us.

God, protector of life, hear us.

We pray for parents who have fled abusive situations in their home and are bringing up children alone.

God, protector of life, hear us.

We pray for families who have been made refugees by discrimination, wars and natural disasters.

God, protector of life, hear us.



**Beloved Father of Joseph and Mary,
your Son Jesus taught us
that there is great rejoicing in heaven
whenever someone lost is found,
whenever someone excluded, rejected or discarded
is gathered into our embrace,
which thus becomes ever wider.**

**We ask you to grant the followers of Jesus,
and all people of good will,
the grace to do your will on earth.
Bless each act of welcome and outreach
that draws those in exile into the community of the Church,
so that our earth may truly become
what you yourself created it to be:
the common home of all our sisters and brothers.
Amen**



Litany

God of compassion, we gather as one people, in an act of solidarity and hope for all those who struggle for the most basic of human rights.

For those whose rights have been abused.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who have fled their homes to seek refuge from persecution.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who face death, torture, or violence from an abusive regime.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who cannot return home for fear of their lives.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who are forced to take desperate measures to find safety.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who are beginning their lives again in a foreign country.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who have lost their lives in the pursuit of refuge.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who have been persecuted for their political and religious beliefs.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who are born homeless, orphaned, or helpless.

Make me a channel of your peace.

For those who live in refugee camps, waiting to return to their homeland.

Make me a channel of your peace.

Loving God, we pray for justice and mercy, healing, and hope. Let us live in the spirit of compassion and understanding. Amen