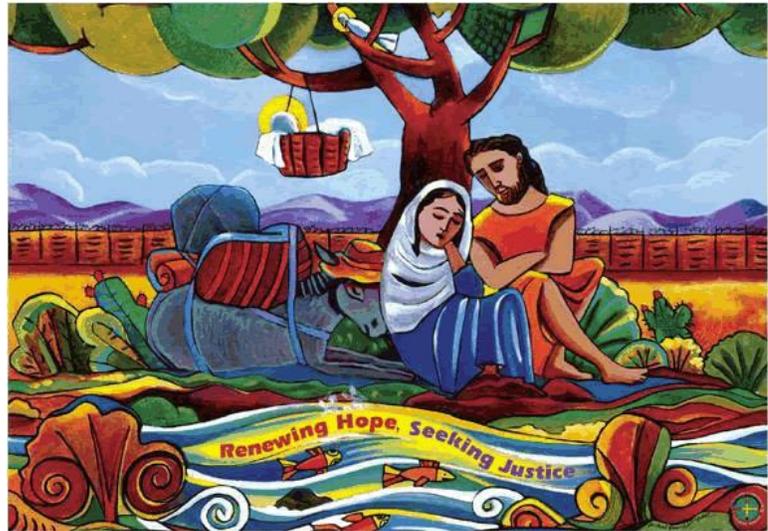


## Would Jesus, Mary and Joseph be Welcome in our Country Today?

In the reading from Matthew (2:13-18) for December 28 we are told that Joseph was told in a dream to flee to escape Herod's murderous intentions to search for the baby the Magi told him about. And so, the Holy Family became refugees because of religious and political persecution and made an arduous journey to Egypt. Historians speak of many probable hardships experienced by this family on their journey and in the foreign land to which they fled.<sup>1</sup>



**As Catholic Christians, how would you answer the question posed in the title of this reflection?** Hopefully, few of us would say no. After all, Pope Francis in his statements concerning the world refugee crisis has made it very clear that we are to welcome the stranger. In his recent message, welcoming the refugee is not even a question.

*Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself. Many institutions, associations, movements and groups, diocesan, national and international organizations are experiencing the wonder and joy of the feast of encounter, sharing and solidarity. They have heard the voice of Jesus Christ: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock' (Rev 3:20).*

Current day refugees face many hardships as they flee the civil war and violence in their own countries. They too are fleeing for their lives. According to Amnesty International, over 50% of the Syrian population is currently displaced. This crisis is real and growing. In 2014, Pope Francis noted, "Millions of refugee families from different nations and of every religious faith lived through dramatic stories and carry deep wounds that will be hard to heal." And so we are encouraged to respond to the refugee crisis in whatever way we can. The Marianist Social Justice Collaborative invites you to visit their website (<http://www.msjc.net/portfolio/racial-immigrant-justice/>) to find out more about this world wide crisis and to explore possible personal responses to the current refugee crisis from a Christian perspective.

Pope Francis has encouraged all of us to pray to Mary, the mother of migrants and refugees:

*Let us make ourselves their neighbors, sharing their fears and their uncertainty and concretely alleviating their suffering. May the Lord sustain the people and institutions that are working with generosity to ensure refugees acceptance and dignity, and to give them reasons to hope.*

*Let us think of how Jesus was a refugee, he had to flee for his life to be saved, with St Joseph and Our Lady, he had to go away to Egypt. He was a refugee. Let us pray to Our Lady, for the pain of refugees, that she be close to these of our brothers and sisters. Let us pray together to Our Lady for our refugee brothers and sisters.*

*Mary, mother of refugees, pray for us.*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.juancole.com/2015/12/would-syrian-refugee-baby-jesus-be-allowed-to-immigrate-to-the-us.html>