

**The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord
and
National Migration Week
January 8-14, 2017**

Last week, we extended our remembrance of the Lord's birth with the solemnity of Mary, the holy mother of God. Today's feast of the Epiphany deepens our sense of the coming of the Lord among us even more. The word "epiphany" gives us a clue. It means a shining forth, a manifestation for all to see. In a word we cannot come to a full understanding of Jesus' birth unless we at the same time have a fresh appreciation of how all of us, all of humanity is connected. Without that appreciation it is meaningless to speak of Jesus as the light of the world, the light of all nations that the prophet Isaiah proclaims: "Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come...Nations shall walk by your light."

That message of our common unity is driven home all the more with the appearance on the scene of the magi. The seekers of truth and light follow the light of a star and come to the stable where Jesus, Mary and Joseph are gathered as a family to offer homage and their gifts. The wise men are depicted in popular art as Asian, and African, and Caucasian. Yes, they are strangers, foreign, and yet by coming on the scene they testify that Jesus is the light for them too and that his light shines more brightly because they have joined his family. Their lives, like the lives of all of humanity, are part of the unfolding mystery that the letter to the Ephesians speaks of—the saving power of the Gospel is destined for *all* people.

In Jesus Christ, God has committed himself to bring together all his sons and daughters. And we, as a people of faith, share that commitment in the catholic or universal Church that reaches to embrace all people. The opening of the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on the Church* says, "The Church is in the manner of a sacrament of the unity of all humanity in God." Today, in the Lord's Epiphany that universality is palpable.

In faith, we are convinced of God's plan in Jesus Christ to bring all people together. In faith, we are also committed to foster God's plan in the world. In this current moment in humanity's history, perhaps the greatest challenge we face in fostering universality and unity stems from the movement of people across the world, the number of which at last estimate is 60 million. They leave their homes

and move to new places for many reasons—as immigrants in search of a sustainable or better life for themselves and their children, as refugees fleeing the ravages of war and religious persecution, and as the victims of human trafficking exploited for the profit of others. These migrants and refugees are not all in far off places. Some of them are right here in our own Archdiocese of Chicago.

As different as these people and their circumstances may be from our own lives and situations, we are nonetheless linked to them in Jesus the light of the nations, the one we celebrate on this Epiphany. But we naturally ask ourselves, “What can I do?” There are, in fact, things that all of us can do.

- We can *learn* about the plight of these people on the move.
- We can *pray* for them.
- We can *support* them with material resources.
- We can *take appropriate action* as citizens to make government responsive to their needs.
- We can challenge racist language and attitudes which demean the dignity of people who are different, and do so especially in our homes so that our children know how wrong this is.
- We can help immigrants by working for policies that are fair and just and account for human dignity.
- We can help refugees by welcoming them as a blessing and not turning them away as a burden.
- We can help the victims of human trafficking by doing whatever is in our power to protect exploited women and children and workers laboring in slave-like conditions.

Faith will guide us to do what we must do. Faith will lead us to overcome our fear of difference and move us to see that the differences God has created in humanity are a blessing. Faith will prompt us to generosity, as we realize how generous God has been to us in Jesus Christ, the light.

On this Epiphany and during this National Migration Week, we are aware of great problems and immense human suffering. We know the words of Isaiah, “...darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples...” Even more, when we look on Jesus present with us in this Eucharist, we know and are convinced of the prophet’s announcement: “...upon you the Lord shines, and over

you appears his glory...nations shall walk by your light..." With these words, we lift our hearts to the Lord and open them to our most vulnerable brothers and sisters. We do all of this never forgetting we are a nation of immigrants, who prize the newcomer, something Pope Francis recalled when offering immigrants a message of hope last year when he visited our country. "I ask you not to forget that, like those who came here before you, you bring many gifts to your new nation. You should never be ashamed of your traditions." Let that same message be in our hearts and on our lips as we join the magi in giving homage to the new born king, the light of the nations.