

Telling The Story

Dehonian Prayer for Immigration

Note To the Leader. If, for reasons of time, there is a need for abridgement, the Story of Susan and/or the Reading from Ruth can be omitted.

INTRODUCTORY RITE

GATHERING SONG: "All Are Welcome" (*Gather pg. 846*)

OPENING PRAYER

God of Migration and Shelter.
You called Abraham to find a home in a new land.
You led people out of slavery to freedom.
You welcomed the outsider and made them family.
And, even your own Son was a refugee from violence.

Today, your children still seek new homes, long for freedom,
hope for welcome and need protection.
We know their story, for it is our story.
We are descendants of immigrant families:
 some with documents and others without.
Our ancestors, and some of us, knew slavery.
Our families, many of them,
 have fled violence and oppression on every continent.

Help us to follow your example,
and cooperate in your work of redemption
by making the story of the immigrant, the slave,
 the refugee, and outsider part of our own story.
Help us to follow in the footsteps of your Son:
who not only walked with the migrant and slave,
 but made their life his own.



All: We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Leader: Let us Pray. Spirit of God, we ask you to open our eyes, ears, and tongues to see and hear your will in scripture, the Rule of Life, and the lives of people, and to tell our story and that of others.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

GOSPEL: Mk 10:13-16

And people were bringing children to him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it."

Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

(A moment of silence.)

IMMIGRATION STORY I: The Story of Elvia and Carlos

In 2014, Elvia and her husband Carlos were arrested by immigration officials and separated at the detention center. Their daughter Adrianna was thirteen, and their son, Jose, was twelve. Adrianna and Jose were left alone at home. Not knowing anyone, they pretended that their parents were at home in order to avoid being separated and being placed in foster care. They had to survive without Mom and Dad. During this time, Elvia felt "miserable, abandoned, alone and rejected." Not allowed contact with her husband, she could not share a visit with him and their two children. Elvia shared "This hurt me very much because we are a close family and the children had to spend ten minutes with me and then ten minutes with their father. What can you talk about in ten minutes?" They applied for asylum and ended up spending sixteen months in the detention center. Elvia added that she lives with women from different nationalities, races, languages and cultures and from all continents. She shared, "We had only one thing in common: we were all incarcerated." The majority of the women were deported and did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to their children before they were gone forever. At the same time, their children could not touch, hug or kiss their mothers before their deportation.



(Some moments of silent reflection before continuing...)

IMMIGRATION STORY II: The Story of Susan

Susan and her daughter fled their home in Burundi and came to the US, fearing for their lives at the hands of a boyfriend from whom they had suffered attacks, kidnapping and death threats. Desperately looking for help, she went to the police multiple times; however, no action was taken in response.

The trauma Susan and her daughter carried with them was deep and very much present, despite being in the US. They suffered depression, anxiety-disorders, nightmares and problems sleeping. It took months before Susan was able to start dealing with the violence that had been directed towards her and her daughter. Collecting documentation was incredibly challenging, as the abuser held a government position in their country of origin. She was finally able to convince her uncle to help gather evidence, but before he was able to

send it, Susan received news that he had been murdered. If deported, Susan and her young daughter face the risk of danger and death.

(A moment of silence.)

DEHONIAN READING: Constitutions 36a, 37a

We know that today's world is in the throes of an intense struggle for liberation: liberation from all that does injury to the dignity of people and threatens the realization of their most profound aspiration: truth, justice, love, freedom (cf GS 26-27).

In all these questions and pursuits we perceive the expectation of a response that people hope for, without succeeding in fully formulating it.

We share these aspirations of our contemporaries, as the possible opening to the coming of a more human world, even should they include the risk of failure and degradation.

(Some moments of silent reflection before continuing...)

SCRIPTURE READING: Ruth 2:8-12

Casting herself prostrate upon the ground, [Ruth] said to him, “Why should I, a foreigner, be favoured with your attention?” Boaz answered her: “I have had a complete account of what you have done for your mother-in-law after your husband’s death; you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom previously you did not know. May the LORD reward what you have done! May you receive a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.”

(A moment of silence.)

IMMIGRATION STORY III: The Story of Élie

Élie initially left the D. R. Congo in 1990 to study in Switzerland, where members of his family were living. Studies in Switzerland were incredibly expensive and so members of his family suggested that he continue his studies in Montréal, Canada where French, his mother tongue, was both the working and official language, and where he had an aunt and some connection. Élie’s aunt not only offered him support for his studies but she also became a key guide for walking him through the immigration process. Immigration became one seemingly never ending process of filling out one form after another. Élie shared that without his aunt guiding him and giving support and confidence through the forms and bureaucracy, he would have been lost! Eventually, after three years, Élie became a Canadian Citizen.

RESPONSE

Leader: Let us now take a few moments to consider these stories from Scripture, our Congregation, and the lives of our brothers and sisters. Then let us share with one another:

What is my story, or that of my family, of being refugee, immigrant, or slave? (or)



What is my experience or story of how immigration policies have affected me?

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Let us pray,

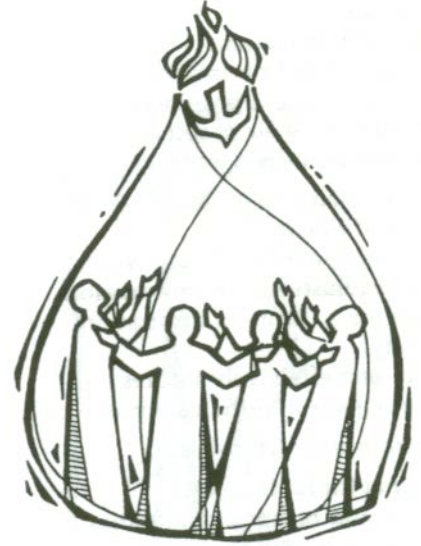
God, you are a God of pilgrims, immigrants, and slaves.
You have made their story your own.
Their story is our history of salvation.

Help us to see our lives as the pilgrim and immigrant story
that they are,
help us to see ourselves and our families
in victims of political and social oppression,
in those who flee economic injustice and lack of opportunity,
in those who are trafficked and held in slavery.

Lead us from telling our stories to the Eucharist,
with hearts open to the source of our freedom,
and feet willing to follow to the summit of our hope for unity and justice.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our service of word and story is ended.
May we continue to tell and live the stories.
And may God bless us, who is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Notate Bene: Please remember that the storytelling is not over! This is a gentle reminder of the request in the cover letter for each of us to write our story and send it to Mary Gorski (scjcommunications@gmail.com) by March 30. The stories will be made available to all.