**Share the Journey and expand the horizons of your heart this Christmas**

*An Advent message by Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle*



**Matthew 2: 13-21**

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning,
 Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted,
 because they are no more.”

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.”

If you look at Christ’s birth and death with today’s eyes, you could think he was a loser; born in a stable and thirty-three years later crucified by his own people like a common criminal.

Despite his lowly birth and his humiliating and agonising death, through the events in his life, this man of very humble origins revolutionised how we see the poor and marginalised, how we think of power and who we deem to be “winners” and “losers” in our world.

Christ’s journeys – while in the womb, during his life as a preacher, to the cross, to his heavenly Father – tell us about how to face our own journeys as individuals and communities today.

**Imagine yourself on a journey**

Let us just take a moment this Advent to reflect on how many times we see news images of pregnant migrant women crossing deserts or getting off unsafe boats, with no home to go to.

Can we imagine ourselves being on their journey or on Joseph and Mary’s migrant journey to Bethlehem? The town was not equipped to welcome or accommodate them. It could not offer the care a pregnant woman needed. The Holy Family was one family too many for this small place.

Can we put ourselves in the shoes of the shepherds who went to visit the Christ child? They were uneducated outcasts in their society and yet the angels appeared to them, not to a rich landowner, and said, “Do not be afraid.”

The human response might be to hide away in fear when something unexpected and unexplained happens, but the shepherds went to look for the child and then they spread the Good News to everyone about what they saw.

**We are all called on journeys**

Like Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Shepherds and the Magi, we are called on journeys which require strength, perseverance, humanity, wisdom and courage.

On these journeys, we meet people who we may be tempted to prematurely label or judge as a “winner” or a “loser” in life, without knowing their full story nor understanding their significance to our lives.

The one person who does not appear to go on a journey in the Nativity is King Herod. He stays in the security of his palace and gives orders to kill all boy children in Bethlehem. He tries to keep hold of his kingdom by using his power to spread fear and mistrust.

The Holy Family again draws the “loser” card and becomes a refugee family in Egypt. When Jesus as an adult tells us “the kingdom of God is within you”, he is asking us to open our eyes to a new way of seeing a world where there are no people who are considered “losers”.

It is in the small and filthy places where our kings are born, not in palaces. The poorest and most marginalised people in our societies deliver true messages of hope to us.

**Expand the horizons of your heart this Advent**

As we prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas, let us remember that hope, like the migrants and refugees of our world, is always on a journey forward. By opening our eyes and reaching out to others, we will find our hearts carried forward by a great wave of love and our destination will be peace. That will be when no person nor country will say “there’s no room for you here”.

Have a blessed Advent journey!

Closing prayer:

Lord of Salvation,
When we reach out to help,
let it be your hand we reach with.
When we comfort the afflicted,
may it be your heart we comfort with.
When we serve the stricken and the grieved,
Let it be your bounty we serve from.

And when we work side-by-side with refugees
Rebuilding what has been lost
Let it be your foundation we build on.
A foundation of justice, a foundation of hope.
A foundation of newness and love
Stronger than the mightiest cataclysm.

**Amen**