



NEW LIFE, New Beginnings

Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison, and go to visit you?

“The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me ... and whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.”

Matthew 25: 37-40, 45

Dear friends,

As we celebrate another Advent season and remember the birth of Jesus Christ, a child born in a manger, of the Virgin Mary, we remember the enormity of such a precious gift to the world. As a new father with a 1-year-old son, I remain in awe of the little gift of new life that God gifted us, after years of hopeful waiting.

When I read and ponder Mary and Joseph’s story in Luke Chapter 2, I try to imagine what it would have been like for them. Traveling to their home region to be registered, riding on a donkey, Mary was ready to give birth. They looked and looked for a safe and warm place and were unsuccessful. They ended up sitting beside a manger in a stable. The place where animals were kept, fed, and held safe.

Continuing with the birth story in Luke 2, we can read that the Angels went to the shepherds first, not to the home of the governor of Syria. The Angels told the shepherds of fields the birth of Jesus. At the same time, three wise men from the east were told to follow the star of Bethlehem, which would guide them to the babe, lying in a manger.

We have had many centuries to hear this story told each Advent season. The baby, born in a manger, of a virgin, is a story with guideposts for us today. But what could the birth story tell us today in the 21st century?

Societal norms in that era were fairly straightforward. A shepherd was seen as one who was on the lower end of the social ladder. Yet, ironically, very important, because they made sure that the flock of sheep they were charged with protecting, did not get harmed.

We have social norms today that far too often “categorize” others who are different, or even speak a different language, “as less than”.

Each year most societies give pomp and circumstance to the phrase, “Tis the season for giving”. And I have wondered, what about the other 11 months of the year? Yes, we remember and reflect on Christ’s birth each December, yet Christ calls us to remember the “least of these” in every season.

Here is an example of welcoming the stranger and gifting the opportunity to find a safe place where they could lay their head. In October, we received a call for assistance from Johanna*, who was helping a young Latino man, Xavier*, who had been robbed and left with only the clothes on his back.

With no wallet, no passport, and no cell phone, Xavier was left marooned in a foreign city. Johanna called us to help connect with his mother, who lives in Central America. Most likely she thought her son was safe. Her phone number was the only one he had memorized.

Kathy, our Resource and Office Manager, Johanna, and I put our resources together and made a phone call via WhatsApp in our attempt to inform the mother that her son was okay, but needed to connect with a cousin living on the East Coast. Over the next few days texts were exchanged and Xavier was given a bus ticket to travel to where his cousin would invite him in.

Several days later, I received a couple of texts from the mother with a picture of her son safely with his cousin sitting at a table full of food, smiling. The other messages were ones of tearful gratitude and thanks for assisting her marooned son connect with family after the traumatic event of being robbed. We (Kathy and I) never met Xavier, nor his mother. Yet, we did what we could to gift the opportunity to Xavier by finding a way to reunite with his family after a rough start in the United States.

I wonder what would have happened if Mary and Joseph hadn’t found the stable. We know the Inn had no vacancies ... for a poor pregnant couple with a donkey. In that humble setting the babe wrapped in cloths, the prince of peace, the King of Kings was born. One of many guideposts that I see the Christ child giving us is to follow Matthew 25:31-46 ... “do unto the least of these ...”

At Caminando Juntos we follow the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger. We welcome persons who speak a different language and have lived with different cultural norms. The staff work hard to assist the Latino migrant adjust to their new home. Welcoming the stranger is a 12-month task and privilege not only one season of the year. I wonder what would have happened to Xavier if Caminando Juntos staff and Johanna hadn’t assisted him, to get back on track after the robbery and go where his cousin was awaiting him.

The staff at Caminando Juntos, wish you and your family a joyful and memorable Advent season. Your prayerful and financial support throughout the year makes it possible for us to welcome the stranger in every season. We invite you to join us in the biblical mandate to not only welcome the stranger but to gift Latino migrants opportunities by supporting Caminando Juntos’ three ministry areas: Immigration Legal Services; Educational Services; and Community Resource Services.

Blessings and peace to you in every season.



Matthew Tschetter
Executive Director



To learn more about the Caminando Juntos ministry, please visit our website at www.presentationsisters.org or scan the above QR code.