

Mary, the heart of the Mystical Body
The Seven Sorrows Rosary, Week 2
The Flight into Egypt

The second of Mary's seven sorrows is the Flight into Egypt. St. Matthew's Gospel (2:13-16) tells the story: "Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.' Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.' When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi."

This mystery gives us a lot to think about. In the Flight into Egypt we see that it didn't take long for Jesus to become a sign of contradiction, and we are reminded that in every age misunderstanding, opposition and even hostility accompany the followers of Christ. The Cross is always present. The Flight into Egypt reminds us to pray for the innocent young victims of abortion, child abuse and violence of all types, for refugees, migrants and the homeless, and for those who are persecuted for the sake of Christ. As we remember these worthy intentions, let's also pause and reflect on what the Flight into Egypt teaches us about Mary and Joseph.



I'm sure the couple had prepared a safe and comfortable home where they expected to raise their Son. But Jesus was born in primitive circumstances beyond their control. Then the young family was forced to leave their idea of home behind for good, becoming refugees in a foreign land. In order to protect their very special baby they left everything behind and experienced insecurities and deprivations of all kinds. But no sacrifice was too great for them. They faced their new situation with courage. After the fiat of the Annunciation and the Presentation in the Temple, God asked another fiat of Mary and Joseph, drawing them further out into the deep.

It struck me that Mary and Joseph are great examples of putting out into the deep. Last year's Synod Fathers wrote to young people: "Mission is a sure target for life's journey, but not a 'satellite navigation system' which lays out the whole route in advance. Freedom always entails



a dimension of risk.... Many pages in the Gospel portray Jesus inviting us to be daring, to put out into the deep, to pass from the logic of following commandments to that of generous and unconditional gift, without concealing the requirement to take up one's cross (cf. Mt 16:24). He is radical: 'He gives all and he asks all: he gives a love that is total and asks for an undivided heart' (Francis, Homily, 14 October 2018)."

Something we notice in working with young people is that for some, discernment never seems to end. We call them perpetual discerners! I attended a vocation talk where the speaker, a theology professor, recognized this tendency and emphasized that vocational discernment is not meant to go on indefinitely. It should come to a definite end with a committed YES that leads to action! I thought that was very good advice.

This is what Mary and Joseph did, isn't it? Each time they received a message from an angel they sprang into action. In the Flight into Egypt they traveled light in order to hold Jesus close to their hearts. As we ponder this mystery let's ask for young people the grace to listen attentively to God's voice speaking in their hearts, and the courage to say YES — to take risks and leave everything behind, putting out into the deep and going wherever God leads them, even when he leads them to the Cross.

Let's also ask for young people the grace of compassion and empathy for those who suffer in any way, especially for those who have been wounded in any way by abortion, (02-12) for migrants and refugees who find their dignity ignored, for the homeless and anyone who is vulnerable before the inhumane attitudes of our throw-away culture.