

Sermon

Lysgudstjeneste for verdens flygtninge

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An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt."

We all know the story. We also know that they stayed in Egypt as refugees till the dreaded king Herod had died. Then they returned to life - to their own country where they had come from.

An angel appeared in a dream, it says in Holy Scripture. I'm sure that many of you will understand if I claim that this dream must have been a nightmare. So many refugees come out of countries where there is no freedom of religion. What we consider the most obvious right in the world, namely the right to believe in the way you wish, is a very dangerous right to exercise in many countries.

As the church of Jesus Christ on this earth we have been through a very tough year. We have witnessed how many brothers and sisters in the faith have been persecuted, tortured and maltreated. To be honest, many of us fear that even though democracy may come as a political freedom and make people able to speak their minds, at the same time this may lead to persecution and silencing of Christians.

This is the time of the year when I realize how many people still have to fight for their faith.

In this country the worst thing that Christians may have to put up with is ridicule. We might run the risk that others think of us as intellectually lacking people. Well, that is a relatively light burden to bear. In other countries Christians risk their lives for their faith - and even worse, as a Christian you may also endanger the life of your family.

You who have come to our country as asylum seekers and refugees remind us of Joseph's nightmare. But you also tell us that a nightmare may eventually become a dream. This is the dream of freedom which has followed the people of God since the early days of the church. It is in the very story of Christ right from the beginning. There was no room for him in this world. Like the refugees of today he had to flee. But his story also rejoices in the promise of freedom to all human beings.

We must keep our faith alert. We must keep praying that God will free the oppressed and the refugee. We must pray that God will make us human and compassionate and that we will recognize a fellow human being in the refugee who is fleeing from tyrants or persecution or poverty. Someone must hope in this world. Someone must believe and love in this world.

I hope that we will use the time of advent to enlarge our hearts and minds by sharing Christ's faith. I hope that we will use this time to reconcile ourselves with our enemies. I hope that Christ will speak right into our prejudices and alter our attitudes so that we can see God and see our fellow human being.