

Adult Homily (Early service only)

This story of the Flight into Egypt has a number of different aspects. At one level it is the all too common story of refugees fleeing from death for political reasons. The holy family today would be fleeing Syria.

At another level it is the story of divine providence taking care of this special baby. Joseph is warned by an angel in a dream to go. And he does not return until the angel returns in another dream and let him know that Herod is dead and it is safe to come home. This is typical of the birth narratives of great heroes. The vulnerable baby that is threatened is protected by a god so that he (yes, I am afraid it is usually a "he" in these ancient cultures) can grow up and fulfill his destiny.

At still another level, Jesus embodies all of the people of God. Just as Joseph's namesake, the son of Jacob, went to Egypt and then became the means to save the rest of his family from death by starvation, so this Joseph saves his family by going to Egypt. Just as all of the Children of Israel left Egypt to return to the land promised them by God, so also this Jesus returns to the land of Israel as promised.

What can we take away? As we enter a new calendar year, what may God be saying to us?

First, simply that God does look out for us. God can be trusted to keep us safe, even if not always comfortable. Our ultimate good is assured.

Second, we can guidance is often a gift. Joseph wasn't looking for an angel. The angel came when he was asleep; he was unconscious. Nevertheless, once the message came, Joseph received it as a message and acted on it. Joseph was willing to be guided by the message.

Third, when we see a refugee, we may be seeing a bright and history changing future. Of course, we should receive refugees with compassion and human decency in any case. Particularly we might be moved by the consideration that our Lord was himself a refugee and in need of protection. Our Episcopal Church in Connecticut has pledged to take seriously the challenge of resettling refugees. I don't know what this might mean for St. Michael's, but I am sure we will respond as best we can.

Finally, what looks like the effects of the generally randomness and risk of the universe, may be part of a plan that we cannot see at the time. Or at least, the current difficulties we are facing can be redeemed by God, so that when the travail is past, there is a new and glorious future. It's all good.