



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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Third Sunday of Easter (May 8, 2011)

Reflecting on the Readings *and* Today: Walking from Suffering to Resurrection

Sr. Marge Wissman, OSF, FAN Action Commissioner considers the migrant's journey of pain and hope.

The Scripture reading this Third Sunday of Easter on the walk to Emmaus for me parallels the journey of the undocumented migrants into the United States. For the migrant, too, it is a journey of hope – suffering before Resurrection.

As the disciples walked to Emmaus “Jesus, himself, drew near and walked with them” (Lk 4:15). They did not recognize him. The disciples were shocked that this man walking with them did not know about Jesus and all that had happened in Jerusalem. The disciples were also frustrated that the body was no longer in the tomb. Jesus answered them: “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (26).



The migrants who make the desperate walk or run across the border take a journey born of difficulty, struggle yet hope. Jesus' Resurrection after pain and struggle sustains many migrants' hopes. Their cry as they make this journey is expressed in a song entitled “Jesus Alive” and based on the Gospel this Sunday. It was composed by Oldenburg Franciscan Sister Rose O'Brien, OSF.

JESUS ALIVE

Refrain: “Stay with us Lord, the day is far spent, lead us to recognize, help us discover;
Jesus Alive, Lord Jesus Alive, Alleluia, Alleluia!”

Verse: “Come walk with us and help us feel your living presence with us.
Come speak a word of life to us and help us understand.”

Refrain: “Stay with us Lord, the day is far spent, lead us to recognize, help us discover;
Jesus Alive, Lord Jesus Alive, Alleluia, Alleluia!”

Would “Jesus Alive” be a plea of the migrants as they try to understand why they need to leave their country? When asked what gives them strength to take this dangerous journey, migrants reply that God is with them and they constantly call on God for protection, safety and success.

Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist for the Los Angeles Times Don Bartletti has taken many pictures of the journey of the migrants, especially those who make their way on the top, sides and even underneath freight trains. All his pictures deliver a powerful message but one picture stands out for me during this season. It is of a migrant holding on to a section of the train with his arms stretched out as if hanging on a cross and his eyes raised to the sky. When the photographer asked him why his eyes were raised he answered: “I was praying to God to stay with me and allow me to pass into Canada safely” – his Resurrection!

The migrants trying to cross the border run into much opposition getting to their destination – whether known or unknown. Often they are either detained or sent back to their country where they endure great poverty and watch their family also endure these hardships. Is this what St. Francis calls ‘Perfect Joy’? In Leonardo Boff’s book [Saint Francis, A Model for Human Liberation](#), he tells a story of Francis with Brother Leo who asks Francis: “What is Perfect Joy?” And Francis answered: “Imagine that I return to Perugia on the darkest of nights, a night so cold that everything is covered with snow, and icicles form in the folds of my habit, hitting my legs and making them bleed. Shrouded in snow and shivering with cold, I arrive at the door of the friary, and after calling out for a long time, the brother porter gets up and asks: ‘Who is it?’ And I respond: ‘It is I, Brother Francis.’ The porter says: ‘Be on your way. Now is not the time to arrive at a friary. I will not open the door for you.’ I insist and he answers: ‘Be on your way right now. You are stupid and an idiot. We are already many here and we do not need you.’ I insist once more: ‘For the love of God, let me in, just for tonight.’ And he answers: ‘Not even to talk. Go to the leper colony that is nearby.’ Well, Brother Leo, if after all this, I do not lose patience and remain calm, believe me, that is perfect joy, true virtue, and the salvation of my soul.”

I see the migrants dirty and exhausted knocking at the door of our country begging to be let in only to be told: “We are already many here and we do not need you.” When they are turned away by detention and/or deportation it may be impossible for them to consider it perfect joy, but many recognize Jesus walking with them in their journey. The migrants seem to have a calm resignation, patience and a sense of perseverance. For many their attitude may be - *amidst the poverty in my country, I am already dead. Crossing the desert gives me the hope of living even if I die.*

And many do die in the desert. As the disciples mourned Jesus and could not comprehend the Resurrection, so many loved ones mourn the migrants who die during their journey. Families may never know where they died or how they died. Hopefully comfort will come to these families just as Jesus brought comfort to the disciples. Father Daniel Groody, CSC, Director of the Center for Latino Spirituality and Culture at Notre Dame, states, “In reality, death is the ultimate border, the journey of faith is the ultimate migration, and God is the ultimate Promised Land.”



Responding in Prayer and Action

- 1) **Pray** for comprehensive immigration reform that is just and compassionate.
- 2) **Order** the USCCB Resource Kit: Justice for Immigrations, A Journey of Hope: www.justiceforimmigrants.org
- 3) **Watch** the following videos:
 - a. **Dying to Live:** Explores why migrants leave their homes and what they face in their journey, as well as the search to find God in the midst of it all. *33 minutes* (Groody Rivers Film Production)
 - b. **Lives for Sale: A Documentary on Immigration & Human Trafficking:** Stories of two young women trafficked in California and Florida explore how this could happen in the U.S. Includes practical responses to stem this lucrative enterprise. *58 minutes* (Maryknoll & Lightfoot Films)
 - c. **One Border, One Body:** In the terrain where many immigrants lose their lives, bishops, priests, and lay people come together each year to celebrate the Eucharist across the sixteen-foot iron fence which divides Mexico and the United States. *30 minutes* (University of Notre Dame)
 - d. **The Visitor:** An aimlessly drifting, disaffected college professor discovers that a couple has taken up residence in his New York City apartment. His unexpected and profound connection with them that changes his life forever. *104 minutes* (Anchor Ray Entertainment)