



**An Advent Prayer and Devotional Guide with a focus on the
immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in our midst**

Developed for The Immigration Project by Rondell Treviño and Matthew Walje - 2018

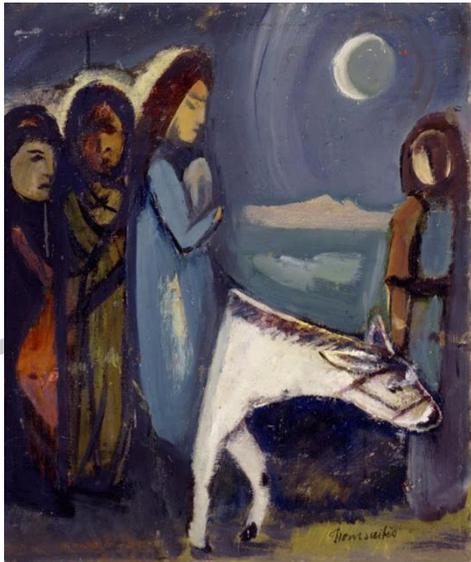
An Immigrant's Advent:

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It is easy to forget that our Savior's family fled violence in their hometown and sought refuge and asylum in Egypt. The Son of God likely spent the first few years of his life as a refugee in a foreign land.

"Now when they [the Magi] had departed [Bethlehem], behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Matthew 2:14-15 ESV

Estimates on the time that Jesus's family spent in Egypt range from as little as a year to as many as three, and they most likely fled to Egypt when he was between a few months up to two years of age. As such, Jesus may have been as old as five before his family returned from living in Egypt and moved to Nazareth. As so often happens in scripture, Christ's life is [pictured in Israel in the Old Testament](#).



Flight to Egypt - Pranas Domšaitis, 1958, Pranas Domšaitis, Lithuanian Art Museum

When Matthew says that Jesus's time in Egypt is a fulfilment of the prophecy "Out of Egypt I called my son," this is a reference to [Hosea 11:1-4](#), which is itself a reference to the time that Israel spent in Egypt. This is interesting because God indicates in the Hebrew Law the time that Israel spent in Egypt, and later as they sojourned in the wilderness should have an indelible impact on how the Israelites were to treat strangers and foreigners in their own land.

*"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, **for you were strangers in the land of Egypt**: I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:33-34*

Similarly, when Jesus speaks in Matthew 25 about the type of behavior that is indicative of His flock, he says: *"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me"*(vs 35), identifying the way that His people treat the poor, less fortunate, and strangers with how we deal with Christ Himself. *"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me"*(vs 39).

The Greek word that Jesus uses here, ξένος or *Xenos*, is the same root from which we get the word xenophobia. This word was purposefully ambiguous in ancient Greek and referred to groups as disparate as a long distance friend, a stranger in the modern sense, or simply a foreigner. In the context, it would seem that the ambiguity of the word is intentional. In this

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passage Jesus is laying out a whole litany of sociological categories that are typically marginalized (the poor, the sick, the destitute, the prisoner, and of course the *Xenos*). What is truly amazing is the way that Jesus flips the script on the very concept of *Xenos* in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, the Samaritan, an ethnic group that was mutually despised by the Jews, a true *Xenos*, is described by Jesus as the neighbor. The word neighbor here is *plhsivon* (*plesion*), a derivative of the word *pelas*, which means near, i.e. one who is near to me, a friend, or member of my community. In Christ, we are supposed to treat the *Xenos* as if they were *Plesion*, to make the foreigner friend.



So, as we enter Advent, the time when we reflect upon and celebrate Emmanuel, God with us, The Immigration project would like to invite you to join us in a time of reflection and prayer about how we can make strangers friends. Christ's advent, incarnation, death, and resurrection made us, who were not just *Xenos* to God, but *Echthros* - Enemies ([Romans 5:10](#)) - to be reconciled and "adopted as sons." In the same way we are called to welcome the stranger as family. Christmas is about much more than a cute story of a sweet baby in a manger as friendly shepherds look on in wonder. It is a visceral, real, and at times brutal reminder of how we serve a God who has walked among us, lived as a refugee, suffered hunger and thirst, and was eventually murdered. We are privileged to have a Great High Priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses ([Hebrews 4:14-16](#)), and we are excited to spend the wonderful season of Advent reflecting on how we can serve and love the *Xenos* in our lives: strangers, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

Dec 1: Thank God for welcoming us, strangers and enemies of God, into His family through the redemptive act of Christ's birth, death, and resurrection. There is no immigrant, refugee, or asylum seeker, criminal or innocent, whose perceived offense against us could ever approach the depth of our offense against God. If God can reconcile us to Him, forgiving our sin, how can we object to welcoming the refugee and immigrant into our communities? [Romans 5:6-10](#)

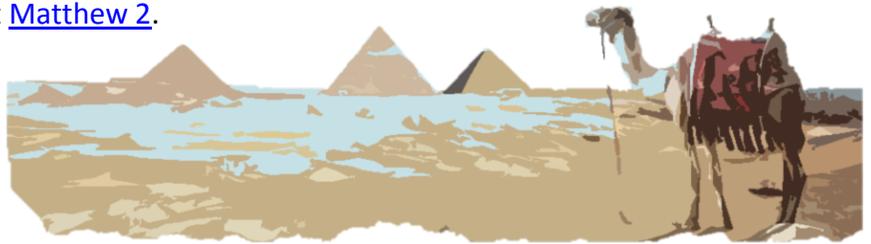
Dec 2: Pray every Immigrant and Refugee would come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The reason for Advent is that God so loved the world, He sent His Son so that the world might be saved through Him. Immigrants and Refugees have many needs, but most pressing of all is the whole "reason for the season," a knowledge of Christ as their Lord and Savior. [John 3:16-17](#).

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Dec 3: Pray that God would protect immigrant families, and keep them unified, whatever happens with immigration policy, just as God provided the means and mechanism of escape for the child Jesus and his family into Egypt [Matthew 2](#).

Dec 4: Pray that God would bless parents who have sacrificed in various ways for the wellbeing of their children, that they would have the opportunity to see their children flourish and fulfill their God-given potential. [Psalm 46:1](#)



Dec 5: Pray for each Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and for each U.S. Senator, including specifically those who represent your congressional district and state. Pray that God would grant them courage to do what is right and just, regardless of the political pressures that they face. Pray that they would have wisdom in discerning the details of policy. [James 1:5](#)

Dec 6: Pray that Christians would remember to see immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers as our neighbors, and that we would welcome them, loving them as ourselves. Just as Israel were strangers in the land of Egypt, so we were strangers and enemies of God before He redeemed us. [Leviticus 19:33-34](#)

Dec 7: Pray that Christ-followers would be united—across denominational, ethnic, and geographic divisions—in prayer and in loving and welcoming Immigrants. [Psalm 133:1](#) Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!

Dec 8: Pray that pastors and ministry leaders would have wisdom to know how to best support and guide Immigrants within their congregations, reminding them of their worth and their identity in Christ. [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

Dec 9: Pray the Church would welcome Immigrants and Refugees, no matter where they come from ethnically and culturally. [Galatians 3:28](#)

Dec 10: Pray for the thousands of Immigrant Children in detention—that they would feel loved and cared for despite the separation from parents and trauma they are going through. [Matthew 19:13-14](#)

Dec 11: Pray that Christians would see refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those from regions that Americans feel are hostile, like the Middle East and Horn of Africa, not as enemies or threats, but as our neighbors. Pray that we would be like the Samaritan who showed mercy, and to whom Jesus commands us “to go and do likewise.” [Luke 10:25-37](#)

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Dec 12: Pray for the Migrant Caravan, that the people in the caravans and others like them would have respect for US law, and would pursue a peaceful, orderly, and lawful entry into the United States. [Romans 13:1-4](#); [Hebrews 13:2](#)



Dec 13: Pray for the Migrant Caravan, that those who qualify for asylum are allowed to come into the United States. Pray the Rule of law is respected and that justice is demonstrated, and that law enforcement officials treat the migrants with respect and professionalism. [Deuteronomy 27:19](#)

Dec 14: Pray for the 11 million undocumented Immigrants, most of whom have overstayed their Visa—pray they are not dismissed as undocumented, but viewed as people created in God's Image worthy of respect and dignity. [Genesis 1:27-28](#)

Dec 15: Pray that the Church in America would show hospitality and help provide for the needs of the poor and often destitute asylum seekers and refugees. [Romans 12:13](#)

Dec 16: Pray that God would help Immigrants and U.S. Citizens build relationships with one another. Help both groups come together in civility. [Matthew 5:44](#)

Dec 17: Pray that Christians would prove to be a moderating and positive force in US politics on the subject of immigration. That in all respects dignity, integrity, and sound speech rather than vitriol and empty rhetoric would characterize Believers' activity in this regard. [Titus 2:7-8](#)

Dec 18: Pray that those DACA recipients facing anxiety and fears about the future would find comfort and hope as they face uncertainty, so that they would be able to continue to work, study and serve their churches and communities despite the looming uncertainty. [1 Peter 5:7](#) – casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Dec 19: Pray that in a time of increasing division and anger over immigration, refugees, and cultural and ethnic divisions that Christians would be peacemakers in their communities and spheres of influence. [Matthew 5:9](#)

Dec 20: Thank God for the role that foreigners played in the genealogy of Christ. Only four women are mentioned in Matthew's genealogy, and three of them were foreigners, members of ethnic groups considered enemies of Israel. Tamar was an Adullamite, Rahab was a Canaanite from Jericho, and Ruth was a Moabite. But God used these women, grafted into Israel by their faith and through God's mercy, to bring about the line of Christ. [Matthew 1:1-17](#)

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Dec 21: Pray that American Christians would welcome immigrant Believers with humility, not with a spirit of patronage, but a willingness to learn and fellowship with immigrants, despite the possible disparities in socio-economic status and education. On the night of Christ's birth the angels did not appear to the educated and wealthy, but to the lowliest shepherds. There is much that we can learn from the discipleship and experience of our immigrant Christian brothers and sisters. [Luke 2:8-20](#)

Dec 22: Pray that God would provide for the tangible needs of Dreamers and other undocumented immigrants, many of whom are paying college or graduate school tuition (without being eligible for federal financial aid), helping to support their families, paying a mortgage or car payment, and facing other financial obligations that would be jeopardized if they lose their work authorizations or face deportation. [Matthew 6:25-34](#)

Dec 23: Pray for the families, the husbands and wives in particular, whose families have been torn apart and separated due to the deportation of one or more members of the family. As Christians the forced separation of husbands and wives should be abhorrent to us. As Christ said, "what God has joined together, let not man separate." While this context is specifically about divorce, the marital difficulties of an imposed separation of thousands of miles and the disruption to the families that this creates should be deeply troubling to us. Pray that these marriages would survive and that the spouses would be quickly reunited. Pray that God would encourage them, despite having to spend this Christmas apart. [Matthew 19:6](#)



Adoration of the Magi - Pablo Scheppers, XVI Century, Public Ownership / Gobierno de Aragón

Dec 24: Pray that Christians would have a spirit of generosity towards asylum seekers and refugees in need of sponsors. Just as Joseph and Mary's flight into Egypt and subsequent stay as refugees was supported and funded by the generosity of the Magi's gifts, so too can Christian's generosity serve to support those in need of an escape to safety. [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Dec 25: Thank God for the story of Advent, and ask Him to help us to reflect upon the birth of Christ and all that it means for mankind. It is easy to look at the story from a Sunday School perspective, especially since we have heard it so many times. Ask God to give us fresh eyes and an open heart to the story. Consider how God used a lowly carpenter, a scandalized woman, a lowly town, a group of foreign Magi, the pagan nation of Egypt, and humble shepherds in the birth of the Creator of the Universe. Consider the heartbreak wrought by Herod in the murder

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of the babies of Bethlehem. The challenges Mary and Joseph faced in living in Egypt. The joy of the shepherds, chosen to witness a choir of angels and the infant Son of God. Meditate on the story of Christ's birth in the context of the cross. Christ came to redeem us, as the enemies of God, and welcome us as sons and daughters. Pray that God would help us to live out our love for others in the realization of this reconciliation. [Matthew 1:18-2:23](#); [Luke 2](#); [Ephesians 2](#)

