



Scriptural reflections, linked as devotions with the suffering steps of refugees & immigrants.

Scripture: *“So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were making an appeal through us.” II Cor. 5:20*

Reflection: In every age, Christians are to be ambassadors for Christ. Surely one appeal today is to urge our government to stop inhumane ICE raids in order to apprehend and deport refugee families from Central America who have fled horrific violence in their home countries and have been ordered removed by a judge. Appalling at any time, these raids were especially cruel as they took place shortly after Christmas, with the plan leaked by *The Washington Post* on December 23 and announced by DHS on January 4, 2016. Arrests of 121 individuals in 7 states included 71 children and 50 adults, mostly mothers. Of these, 77 were transferred to Dilley Detention Center in Texas. For those who received legal assistance, 33 individuals were granted stays of removal. However, many had improper and incomplete legal assistance, leaving their case inadequately represented in court.

ICE’s severe enforcement measures sent waves of fear throughout immigrant communities. In some cases ICE agents forced their ways into homes, shouted at children, and treated them roughly. In the aftermath, fear can lead to depression, anxiety and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In Flint, MI, some undocumented immigrants were too afraid to go to water distribution sites lest they be asked for ID. School attendance dropped in some cities. In Maryland, the situation was so serious that the CEO of Prince George’s County Public Schools wrote to DHS to urge an end to the raids.

During this fourth week in Lent, Christians follow Jesus on his way up to Jerusalem to suffer and die for love of all humanity. Now we are his ambassadors, enabling God to appeal through us for justice, compassion, and love, especially for the most vulnerable and suffering among us.

Story: Benito is a Guatemalan immigrant who has lived in Virginia for 10 years. Early in the morning of January 4, 2016, 3 ICE agents came to his door looking for a minor who possibly had an order of removal, who was the daughter of a close family friend who had fled violence in her home country. Benito’s undocumented minor brother was also in the home. On that day, ICE did not apprehend anyone, but all the residents have had difficulty sleeping due to anxiety and fear of future raids. Now Benito works with United We Dream and Dreamers of Virginia, helping to organize a know-your-rights training in his area. (From United We Dream’s report: “The Real Impact of Immigration Raids,” available at: <http://unitedwedream.org/research/report-the-real-impact-of-immigration-raids/>.)

Action/Resources:

1. Call the White House at 866-473-5915, say where you are from, and urge President Obama to STOP plans to deport Central American children and families fleeing violence. They should have access to legal counsel so they can apply for asylum in the U.S.
2. Read the United We Dream report on www.unitedwedream.org/research/report-the-real-impact-of-immigration-raids.
3. See the IIC January webinar on raids: www.interfaithimmigration.org/media/webinars.
4. See the photo at right of a Stop the Raids civil disobedience, with 14 arrested at the White House on Feb. 23rd. Read more about it at <http://www.latintimes.com/immigration-activists-arrested-front-white-house-civil-disobedience-protest-treatment-371003>, and tweet to POTUS to #StopTheRaids and #Not1More! Activists carried 83 crosses, symbolizing Central American migrants killed in 2014 following deportations back into the horrible violence from which they had migrated to escape.



Prayer: *God, give us the strength and courage to be your ambassadors, appealing to our government for justice and compassion for immigrants, and urging the administration to protect families fleeing from violence in their home countries and not inflict further pain on them. AMEN.*

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