

## **A Homily for the Feast of the Epiphany National Migration Week 2012**

[para español, ver abajo]

It's those who have lived the journey who know the journey best, or so the wisdom goes. And there's a fair amount of truth to that. Those who have been parents know best the joys and the trials of parenting. Those who have experienced the death of a loved one know best what it's like to sit at the dinner table alone or go to a social gathering unaccompanied. Those who have played in a symphony have an edge on appreciating the beauty while listening.

Yet it's also true that sometimes outsiders see more clearly than do insiders. Sometimes we can see the missteps and pitfalls in someone else's marriage or someone else's parenting more clearly than in one's own.

It's been suggested to priests that when they are assigned to a new parish, they pay attention to the experience of first impressions – such as the atmosphere of welcoming, how the phone is answered, the ease of navigating hallways and finding entrances. Sometimes we get so used to how things are handled that it's easy to miss poor organization or unwelcoming practices – except to a newcomer or an outsider.

In T.S. Eliot's poem "Journey of the Magi" one of the magi who had endured the hardships of that memorable journey to find the One foretold by Hebrew prophets reminisces in his old age about that long-ago trek. He tells of discovering new life in that journey in a way that he would never forget nor ever regret the hardships. Yet what is painful, he says, is that upon their return home they found everyone to be indifferent to their discovered wisdom, their new found peace and joy. Everyone preferred their own long-held visions and gods. The old magus who had once been an insider among them had become an outsider. He had seen new life, but no one else could move off of center and live the new life with him. They did not see what this outsider saw, and so missed the new life.

It was not unlike many of the Jewish folk of Paul's day who struggled with his message that the Gentiles were as saved as were the chosen people. What good is it to be chosen if everyone is chosen? What good if everyone is special? How could it be that following the Law did not save or circumcision was not necessary? Paul's new vision, or rather the Good News of Jesus that Paul was proclaiming, did not seem like good news to many. In effect the old ways were good enough or ever better, and the new born newcomers did not receive joyful welcome by everyone. And yet it was these "outsiders" of a sort that offered a new and blessed gift.

So, it seems, we might be wise to give a hearing to outsiders, to welcome them for the wisdom or the new life they might be bringing. One never knows. It may

be God's way of opening new doors, of renewing our vision and our hope when we get mired in the muck of everyday living, of bringing us to life lived in a new way.

The United States bishops have designated this week of 2012 as National Migration Week, asking us to do some thinking about immigration in our land. It's one of those topics we all have opinions about - one of those topics it's even risky to think about, much less talk about out loud. Immigration has always been unsettling, not only here in this nation but in other nations as well. If you've listened to or read the news, you know that it's even more unsettling in the nations of Europe than it is for us. When outsiders come, they ask insiders to change the status quo – just ask (if we could) our own grandparents and great grandparents and great-great-grandparents who were such instigators long ago.

Yet it's just because outsiders come with a different way of doing things that they can also come with a new vision and a new wisdom. The Germans brought a sense of industriousness and order, a no-nonsense efficiency to life and productivity, along with their great gift of beer. The British were always "quite proper" – and don't we all wish there was a bit more of that today amid the chaos of our political upheavals? And the Poles – their hospitality. And the Japanese – their attention to detail and great respect for the other person. And the many who come from the various Latino cultures – their emphasis on family, no matter the cost. Such emphasis becomes a value at a time when families struggle to be family. Outsiders have been divine blessings that we come to recognize in retrospect. Who knows what our children will some day come to appreciate about the many who come to our land in these days.

[At this point, if you are a bit courageous, you might want to ask those in the assembly what they treasure from their own ancestors.]

They were all outsiders at one point, outsiders who not only enriched our living but moved us forward. Just as once the Lord Jesus brought a new vision for us all, a vision of a God whose only relentless stance was love of us, that new vision continues to grow and expand, not unlike the exploding universe that keeps filling an endless void.

So the bishops of this country have proposed six goals or values toward comprehensive immigration reform:

- 1) A program of **earned legalization** that allows foreign nationals a way of obtaining lawful permanent residence.
- 2) A way of reducing illegal immigration by providing a **worker program** to enter a country legally and safely for employment.
- 3) **Family-based immigration reform** so that families can be reunited quickly.
- 4) **A restoration of Due Process Rights** for immigrants.

- 5) A means of examining the **roots causes of migration** such as underdevelopment and poverty.
- 6) A renewed focus on **enforcement** of existing borders and of measures to control illegal immigration.

Assimilating newcomers is never easy, but then nothing that is worth doing is ever easy. Readjusting to new ways is always a bit frightening, just because we don't like to look foolish doing new things, but then we do profess to follow the Lord Jesus, the Ultimate Fool to so many.

But then we've always made such shifts. We were once children who stumbled through adolescence just to become adults. Many have married and fought the fights of marriage and love just to become one. We've moved from one neighborhood to another to another to another, just to find the comfort of home. We've lived through the deaths of those we love; we've endured rejection and hurt; we've talked through problems and conflicts. We've all sat on the outside looking in at some new stage of life and saw the face of God through the window that turned out to be a mirror. At one point or another we've all been God's outsiders coming into a new and strange land of new life in some form. And more than once. All of us are indeed God's magi to the world.

The above homily is only an example, or at best a suggested unfolding of what the homily might be. A preached homily in the homilist's own words is almost always more effective than reading someone else's homily. Should a homilist wish to use the above ideas, it might be helpful to see this homily in an outline of five segments unfolding the message.

- Insiders and outsiders – their perspectives
- Eliot's "Journey of the Magi"
- A reference to the Ephesians reading
- National Migration Week and the gifts of immigrants
- Our own experiences of being outsiders to new stages of life

### **Other Images for a Homily for The Feast of the Epiphany**

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might be appropriate, in part because the story is about receiving the promise of fulfilling wishes and in part because of how one responds with the gifts one receives.

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Gluskabe is the one who made the larger animals smaller and less threatening to humans. He lives on a distant island in a great lake. It was said that any man who sought Gluskabe and found him would be granted a single wish.

Four men of the Abenaki tribe decide to seek out Gluskabe. One is a man who longs for material wealth. Another is a man who longs to be the tallest man on Earth. The third is afraid of death and wants to live forever. The final man wishes to become a great hunter so that his family and village will never go hungry. They cross the great lake and find Gluskabe who greets them and agrees to grant their wishes. Gluskabe gives each man a pouch, instructing them not to open it until they return to their respective dwellings.

The men part ways and each begin their journey home. The man who wished for material wealth sails home in his canoe, but he cannot resist the allure of the pouch and opens it while still at sea. The material objects he wished for pour from the pouch and fill the boat so that it is overweight and sinks. The man, tangled in his new possessions, sinks with it. The man who wished to be the tallest man on Earth also cannot resist opening the pouch before he arrives home, and so opens his pouch while still on his way. Immediately he is transformed into a pine tree, rooted and taller than any man. The man who fears death also opens his pouch before the instructed time and is transformed into a boulder, its structure eternal.

The last man does not open his pouch until he is inside his home. He finds the pouch empty, but knowledge floods him. He hears the voices of the animals and learns their ways and how to respect them. He becomes the greatest hunter among his people; his family and village are always well-fed.

The book can be found in the children's sections of many libraries or purchased as well through Amazon Books.

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The story is a tale of giving gifts (appropriate for this season), but also it highlights gifts that are for all peoples (perhaps to suggest that the gifts of our nation are not only for the people of this nation but for the human family). The homilist might even invite members of the assembly to name gifts we as a nation have received – certainly freedom, but also what others? In the story of the magi, those who came with treasures also gave their treasures away. Indeed, Paul's Letter to the Ephesians reminds us of how we as foreigners have received the gift of faith, a gift intended to be shared with others. Like the fourth Abenaki man, the true gift is a gift that finds many sharing in its blessings. It is also the responsibility of living our faith as well as sharing our nation's gifts with those who come.

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A kind of midrash on the story of the Three Magi tells of how they were sorcerers, people who dealt with magic. Having found the One who had been foretold, they then left behind their tools of magic and sorcery – gold, and frankincense, and myrrh as a symbolic gesture of moving on to a new way of life. The link to National Migration Week might be suggested in the understanding that people of faith are always on a journey into new and different expressions of life. As newcomers make their way to our land, the followers of the Lord Jesus are faced with leaving behind established patterns of living with a willingness to broach new life styles and to adapt to new ways – albeit not always easily or without pain and struggle. It is the story of discovering the Kingdom of God in our midst again and again in many different ways. T.S. Eliot's poem "Journey of the Magi" echoes this same theme and can easily be found on the internet by googling the title. The poem itself would not be appropriately read in a homily, but a summary of the story might be helpful to make the point.

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- 1) Invite the parishioners in the pews to share with those around them a favorite gift they received this season. This could serve as a lead-in to...
- 2) exploring with those in the assembly the gifts we share as a nation, those which are particularly noteworthy and perhaps somewhat unique to our land. Some that might surface could include: freedom of religion, freedom to move, the beauty of the environment, many national and state parks, the abundance of space in which to live,

abundance of water, freedom to choose a profession, educational opportunities, democracy, etc.

The obvious transition to National Migration Week would then be the receiving and giving of gifts, in a sense recycling the gifts we have received to those who come without the gifts we have as a nation.

Estimados hermanos sacerdotes y diáconos,

Cuando el Arzobispo ListECKI y el Concilio Arquidiocesano de Sacerdotes aprobaron una resolución para predicar durante la Solemnidad de la Epifanía incorporando el apoyo de los obispos americanos sobre la reforma migratoria en los Estados Unidos, ellos reconocieron la realidad pastoral que en algunas parroquias sería necesario hacerlo en otra ocasión. Si este es el caso,

- le urgimos a que considere predicar como hemos recomendado lo más pronto posible después de la Fiesta de la Epifanía, quizás durante el fin de semana del 14-15 de enero de 2012 que indicaría el final de la Semana Nacional de la Migración;
- la homilía que sigue puede usarse, siempre y cuando el sacerdote o diácono la adapte utilizando las lecturas bíblicas del domingo que escoja.

A seguir es un guía que ofrecemos para asistirle en la preparación de su homilía. El Comité de Justicia Social y el Concilio Arquidiocesano de Sacerdotes están profundamente agradecidos al Padre Joe Juknialis por su labor y las sugerencias que aparecen aquí.

Michael Bertham, OFM Capuchin  
Presidente, Comité de Justicia Social/Concilio Arquidiocesano de Sacerdotes

**Homilía**  
**para la Fiesta de la Epifanía**  
**Semana Nacional de la Migración 2012**

Son aquellos quienes han vivido la jornada quienes mejor la conocen, o por lo menos eso es lo que se piensa. De hecho, hay mucha verdad en esto. Los padres de familia conocen mejor que nadie las alegrías y las dificultades en la crianza de sus hijos. Los que han sufrido la muerte de un ser querido saben lo que es sentarse a la mesa a comer solos o ir a un evento social sin alguien que les acompañe. Los que han tocado en una sinfonía tienen la ventaja de poder apreciar la belleza de la música a la vez que escuchan.

Pero también es cierto que a veces los que están ajenos a una situación pueden ver las cosas con más claridad que aquellos que la viven. A veces podemos ver los tropezones y peligros en otros matrimonios, o errores en la crianza de hijos mucho mejor que en nuestras propias vidas.

Cuando un sacerdote es asignado a una parroquia nueva, se le aconseja que preste atención a las primeras impresiones – tal como el ambiente de bienvenida, como se contesta el teléfono, qué tan fácil es encontrar las entradas y caminar por los pasillos. A veces estamos tan acostumbrados a la manera en que las cosas que hacen, que es fácil que la mala organización y prácticas poco acogedoras pasen desapercibidas – pero no por un extranjero o recién llegado.

En el poema “El viaje de los magos” de T.S. Eliot, uno de los magos que había sobrevivido las dificultades de esa jornada tan memorable para encontrar al anunciado por los profetas hebreos, ya en su vejez, recuerda todo lo sucedido hace tanto tiempo. Relata como descubrió una vida nueva en esa jornada y afirma que nunca olvidaría o lamentaría las dificultades vividas. Pero lo más que le dolió, dice él, fue que al regresar a su país vió que a nadie le importaba la sabiduría que él descubrió, o la paz y la alegría que encontró. Todos preferían las visiones y los dioses a los cuales se habían aferrado por mucho tiempo. El mago anciano quien anteriormente había sido uno de ellos se convirtió en un extranjero. Aunque había visto una manera nueva de vivir, los demás no podían aceptar y vivir este nuevo estilo de vida con él. No veían lo que él veía, y por eso perdieron la oportunidad de esta vida nueva.

Esto no es muy diferente al pueblo judío de los tiempos del apóstol San Pablo quienes no podían comprender como era posible que los gentiles merecieran la salvación tanto como ellos, el pueblo escogido por Dios. ¿De qué servía entonces ser escogidos, si todos son escogidos? ¿Qué significa ser especial si todos son especiales? ¿Cómo podía ser que cumplir con la ley no garantizara la salvación, o que la circuncisión no fuera necesaria? La nueva visión de Pablo, o mejor decir, la Buena Nueva de Jesús que Pablo proclamaba, no parecía ser muy buena para muchos. Para ellos, las tradiciones del pasado eran suficientes

y hasta mejores, lo que no permitía que los extranjeros recibieran una bienvenida sincera y alegre por todos en general. Sin embargo eran estos “extranjeros” que ofrecían un don nuevo y bendito.

Así que, pudiéramos ser prudentes si escuchamos a los extranjeros y les damos la bienvenida, aceptando el estilo nuevo de vida que traen consigo, y la sabiduría de sus experiencias. Uno nunca sabe. Esta puede ser la manera en que Dios nos abre nuevas puertas, renovando nuestra visión y esperanza cuando nos estancamos en el lodo del diario vivir, para guiarnos a vivir nuestras vidas en una manera nueva.

Los obispos de los Estados Unidos han designado esta semana de 2012 como la Semana Nacional de la Migración, invitándonos a reflexionar sobre la inmigración en nuestro país. Es uno de esos temas sobre los que existen muchas opiniones; sentimos que tan solo pensar sobre la inmigración es un riesgo, y decir lo que pensamos en voz alta mucho más aún. La inmigración siempre ha sido inquietante, no solamente en esta nación, sino en muchas otras naciones también. Si usted ha escuchado o leído las noticias, sabe que la inmigración es aún más inquietante en las naciones de Europa que aquí. Cuando llegan extranjeros, estas naciones piden a los residentes ya establecidos – los que están adentro – que cambien el *status quo*. Tan solo preguntemos (si es posible) a nuestros propios abuelos y bisabuelos como fueron tratados cuando ellos llegaron como extranjeros.

Y es exactamente porque los extranjeros tienen una manera diferente de hacer las cosas y de ver el mundo que pueden traer consigo una visión nueva, y nueva sabiduría. Los alemanes trajeron un sentido industrioso y de orden, eficiencia y sensatez en su vidas, y también de productividad, así también como el gran don de cerveza. Los británicos siempre fueron muy “correctos” en su comportamiento, ¿y no quisiéramos que hubiera un poco más de esta característica hoy en día en el caos de escándalos políticos? Del pueblo Polaco – su hospitalidad. De los Japoneses – su atención a los detalles y el gran respeto hacia los demás. Y de los muchos que pertenecen a las varias culturas Latinas – su énfasis en la familia, cueste lo que cueste. Este tipo de énfasis es muy valioso en tiempos en que vemos como a las familias se les hace difícil mantenerse unidas. Los extranjeros han sido bendiciones divinas que llegamos a apreciar no inmediatamente, sino con el transcurso del tiempo. ¿Quién sabe qué será lo que nuestros niños apreciarán algún día de las muchas personas que llegan a nuestro país en estos días?

[Al llegar a este punto, si es usted un poco audaz, puede preguntar a los miembros de la asamblea que aprecian de sus propios antepasados.]

Todos ellos fueron extranjeros una vez, extranjeros que no solamente enriquecieron nuestras vidas, pero nos ayudaron a salir adelante como país. Así como Jesús trajo una nueva visión para todos nosotros, una visión del Dios cuya



única e implacable actitud es amor hacia nosotros. Esa nueva visión continúa creciendo y expandiéndose, como el universo que estalla continuamente, llenando un vacío sin fin.

Los obispos de este país han propuesto seis metas o valores para lograr una reforma integral de la inmigración:

- 7) A program of **earned legalization** that allows foreign nationals a way of obtaining lawful permanent residence.
- 8) A way of reducing illegal immigration by providing a **worker program** to enter a country legally and safely for employment.
- 9) **Family-based immigration reform** so that families can be reunited quickly.
- 10) **A restoration of Due Process Rights** for immigrants.
- 11) A means of examining the **roots causes of migration** such as underdevelopment and poverty.
- 12) A renewed focus on **enforcement** of existing borders and of measures to control illegal immigration.

La integración de los recién llegados no es nunca fácil, pero nada que vale la pena es fácil. Aprender nuevas maneras de hacer las cosas siempre es un poco inquietante, porque no nos gusta aparecer tontos al intentar algo nuevo, pero como bien saben, profesamos ser seguidores del Señor Jesús, el sumo ejemplo de insensatez para tantos.

Pero siempre hemos pasado por cambios. Fuimos niños una vez, y tropezamos durante toda nuestra adolescencia para poder llegar a ser adultos. Muchos se han casado y han pasado por las batallas del amor y del matrimonio para convertirse en uno. Nos hemos mudado de un vecindario a otro y a otro, buscando el confort de un hogar. Hemos vivido a través de las muertes de seres queridos; hemos soportado el rechazo y ofensas; hemos dialogado buscando la resolución de problemas y conflictos. Todos nos hemos sentido como extranjeros sentados afuera, mirando adentro hacia una nueva etapa de la vida, y allí vemos la faz de Dios, a través de la ventana que resultó ser un espejo. Alguna vez u otra, todos hemos sido los extranjeros de Dios, entrando a una tierra nueva y extraña donde nos encuentra una vida nueva. Y esto nos ha sucedido más de una vez. Todos nosotros en realidad somos como el mago del poema, revelando Dios y su nuevo estilo de vida al mundo.

Esta homilía es tan solo un ejemplo, o por lo menos una indicación de lo que su homilía puede ser. Una homilía que consiste de las palabras escritas por el homilista es siempre más efectiva que leer la homilía de otra persona. Si el homilista decide usar las ideas de la homilía anterior, puede ser útil crear un bosquejo de la homilía con cinco segmentos que van desarrollando el mensaje.

Insiders and outsiders – their perspectives

- El punto de vista de la persona establecida o residente y del extranjero
- El poema ‘El viaje de los magos’ de Eliot
- Mención del pasaje de Efesios

- La Semana Nacional de la Migración y los dones que aportan los inmigrantes
- Nuestras propias experiencias siendo extranjeros ante nuevas etapas en nuestras vidas

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The obvious transition to National Migration Week would then be the receiving and giving of gifts, in a sense recycling the gifts we have received to those who come without the gifts we have as a nation.