
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 286

deaths in search of better life 'beyond tragic'

It was 'beyond tragic' that deserts and seas became the unmarked graves of many human beings who were searching for a better life, a leading Catholic scholar of migration theology said in Melbourne recently.



Dr. Gemma Tulud Cruz, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Theology at Australian Catholic University [ACU] and member of its Institute of Religion and Critical Inquiry, said it was unsurprising that the often tragic conditions of migration moved the Church to reflect on and articulate its mission among migrants.

"At no other point in history has the number of people on the move [been] at such a large scale that the current period is

being referred to as the age of migration," Dr Cruz said, citing United Nations statistics that there were 232 million international migrants in 2013 and that the number of international migrants continued to grow by 10.8 million from 2010-13.

"Today, migrants account for 3% of the global population and while this may seem miniscule it actually represents a lot of people. In fact, if all migrants in the world were to come together to constitute a country, theirs would be the world's fifth most populous. More disturbingly, the June 2014 UN refugee agency report notes record number of displacements in the past year, the highest since World War II. To date, there are 51.2 million refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide. By region, Asia and the Pacific had the largest refugee population overall at 3.5 million people."

Dr Cruz was delivering the eighth annual **Walter Silvester Memorial Lecture**, which honours the pastoral gifts of Pallottine priest Fr Walter Silvester SAC, who worked in the Archdiocese of Melbourne from 1951 until his death in 2005. The lecture, held on 28 October this year at ACU's Melbourne campus, was sponsored by the Union of Catholic Apostolate.

During his introductory remarks, the Pallottines' Australian leader, Fr Eugene San sac, led a tribute to the founding coordinator of the lecture, Dr Patricia Heywood, who died in July.

Dr Cruz, who was born and raised in the Philippines and has lived and worked in Europe and the US, said the Church's mission among migrants and refugees needed to take the form of incarnational evangelisation. "In this understanding and practice of mission, accompaniment and acts of listening, or witness as *witness*, is the key pastoral response," she said.

Dr Cruz, who is also a member of the Council for Australian Catholic Women established by the Australian bishops in 2000 to promote the participation of women in the Church, said Christians should demonstrate solidarity with the stranger and never forget "that from a Christian perspective, all of us are strangers".

"Mission among migrants from the perspective of social justice then means that charitable acts need to be complemented by work that targets not just the effects but also the causes; it offers not only instant or short-term benefits such as temporary protection visa, but works, as well, toward strategic, long-term solutions. Moreover, it means pastoral work not just after but also before and during migration...

"We live in only one world; we share in only one planet with limited and dwindling resources. How can we not share it? The overwhelming physical, material, or economic motivation of people on the move reinforces the Christian idea that we ought to share our 'bread' and become, like Jesus, the 'bread of life' (John 6:35) for others."



Dr Cruz said global solidarity, or being one people, may be the most important virtue, individually and collectively, in our time.

"Ultimately, migration is not just about the experience of shifting from place to place, it is also linked to the ability to imagine an alternative, individually and collectively."

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item 287

the waiting mother

ADVENT (coming) is all about waiting – waiting for Christmas, the commemoration of the birth of Jesus the Messiah. Generations waited for the fulfilment of God's promise. That waiting culminated at Christmas.

Waiting is integral to life. Waiting implies expectation, anticipation and hope. Many things happen without our waiting for them, but decisive turns in all spheres of life warrant planning, investment and waiting. Children wait to grow up, adults wait to enter family life, parents wait for their children to settle, old people wait for the final kiss of life from their children for a peaceful final journey.

In the spiritual realm, the most important waiting is that of the soul for the vision of God, the end and ultimate fulfilment of life. God too waits patiently for all his children, even those who deserted him, to come back to His Kingdom.

On the temporal plane, one of the moments of great anxiety is when a woman waits for the birth of her child. Nine months seems to be an eternity, her entire focus centred on the child growing inside her. She prepares both body and mind to receive a most valuable gift.



There was a mother who lived in Judea some two thousand years ago. Mary was a beautiful young lady, unassuming and humble. When of age, as per custom, her parents found a suitable spouse and had her engaged. She obeyed. From then on like other such women, she would have started dreaming about commencing family life, making mental plans to create a home of peace and happiness. She would have prayed intensely to God to become a responsible wife and bring up her children in true love and fear of God. Then the unexpected happened. Out of the blue, a stranger, an angel of God, appears, greets her, identifies himself and makes an earth-shaking statement – a statement no other woman in history had ever heard! She kept her composure and cleared her genuine doubts. She expressed her Magnificat (Lk. 1, 46-55).

Henceforth the circumstances surrounding her pregnancy and childbirth were very strange and different. Ordinarily a spouse becomes the partner, but here the Spirit of God intervenes. Normally God gives life to a human being but in this case God takes

up a human life. Pregnancy is a miracle, but there is no greater miracle than God being born in the womb of a hitherto unknown woman. The Creator becomes a creature, the all-powerful becomes virtually powerless, and the fullness of everything empties himself.

We can reflect on those unusual happenings – some of great rejoicing and celebration, others of imminent danger, defying human logic.

- The Annunciation was strange but a direct intervention of God through an angel. Mary was to be selected as the mother of the Saviour - the one and only human being to receive this greatest recognition (Lk. 1, 26-39).
- Mary faced potential rejection by her spouse and break-up of their proposed marriage, the wrath of the community and social ostracism. The existing law declared stoning to death for being pregnant before marriage. Could she tell her parents or share this news with her friends? Who would believe her? This uncertainty would have worried her a lot, but for her absolute faith in Yaveah.
- Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth three months after the Annunciation and the accolades she gets. This would have been a moment of great joy for all (Lk. 1, 39-56).
- The travel of about 80 miles in four or five days or more from Nazareth to Bethlehem for registration was, in an advanced stage of pregnancy, at great risk and discomfort (Lk. 2, 4-7)
- Turned away from all human residential places, delivery in a stable (a food trough for animals) – not in a hospital or home – without essential materials or help (Lk. 2, 7). Could there be a greater test of faith and patience?
- Glorification by the shepherds and angels in praise of the new-born. This would have given Mary a heavenly experience to make her forget about earlier difficulties (Lk. 8, 20).
- The homage by the Magi (Math. 2.1, 12). Obviously a great surprise for Mary and Joseph and they would have wondered at the way God was caring for them.
- Meeting Simeon and Anna while visiting the Temple for purification on the eighth day. Touching incidents and great prophecies from saintly old people about their future life (Lk. 2. 21-38).

- Death threats to the child Jesus from Herod (Math. 2-1, 8). Imagine the panic this could have caused to the family, and so soon after the birth.
- Fleeing to Egypt (Math 2:13) from the paranoid Herod and returning 4 years later to Galilee, an estimated 250-300 miles each way, through what would have been extremely difficult terrain
- An understanding husband, who stood with Mary and provided her with love and security by becoming the custodian of the family. St Joseph, known for his profession, would have built a house and Mary made that a home with Jesus at the centre – a home as all our homes should be – a haven, transformed into a heaven by the presence of Jesus and Mary.



By deciding to be born into this world through the medium of a low profile woman, God raised human motherhood to the loftiest position and recognized blessed Mary as the embodiment of the dignity, divinity and sanctity of motherhood. This medium naturally became the mediator between humankind and God, between human nature and Godliness, between condemnation and redemption. There is no name on earth higher than the name of Jesus and there is no other name dearer to God than the name of Mary.

As we approach Christmas let us ask Jesus and Mary to give us greater insights into the purpose, depth and implications of the incarnation to enable us to go to the manger with a pure heart. Our holy Mother is waiting to fill us with love and protection under her hope-giving blue mantle, while we wait for the second coming of her Son.

Pope Francis assures us: “Our Father is patient, he loves us, and he gives us Jesus to guide us to the Promised Land. Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness. He is our peace”.

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sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

- on #149** Excellent article on exorcism. **JW 13.12.14**
- on #148** its a Pallottine student studying theology at Cedara. am in formation house in Merrivale South Africa. i would like to ask if it would be possible to be receiving the Bulletin and sometimes writing my own articles to share with Pallottine family. and would you please send some of this year, 2014... of the last months. i very much enjoy the touching and inspiring stories that people writes **RN 05.12.14**