

1ST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**ST PETERS ANGLICAN CHURCH BUNDOORA****Sunday 28th December 2025****Fr. Stephen Monsiegnur****Readings:**¹ Isaiah 63:7-9 / Psalm 148 / Hebrews 2:10-18 / Matthew 2:13-23**Theme:** *"Out of Egypt"***Isaiah 63:7-9**

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord,
 the praiseworthy acts of the Lord,
 because of all that the Lord has done for us
 and the great favor to the house of Israel
 that he has shown them according to his mercy,
 according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

⁸ For he said, "Surely they are my people,
 children who will not act deceitfully,"

and he became their savior

⁹ in all their distress.

It was no messenger or angel

but his presence that saved them;

in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them;

he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Psalm 148

¹ Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens;

praise him in the heights!

² Praise him, all his angels;

praise him, all his host!

³ Praise him, sun and moon;

praise him, all you shining stars!

⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens

and you waters above the heavens!

⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord,

for he commanded and they were created.

⁶ He established them forever and ever;

he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.^[a]

⁷ Praise the Lord from the earth,

you sea monsters and all deeps,

⁸ fire and hail, snow and frost,

stormy wind fulfilling his command!

⁹ Mountains and all hills,

fruit trees and all cedars!

¹⁰ Wild animals and all cattle,

creeping things and flying birds!

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¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers of the earth!
¹² Young men and women alike,
 old and young together!
¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord,
 for his name alone is exalted;
 his glory is above earth and heaven.
¹⁴ He has raised up a horn for his people,
 praise for all his faithful,
 for the people of Israel who are close to him.
 Praise the Lord!

Hebrews 2:10-18

¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying,
 “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters;
 in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”
¹³ And again,
 “I will put my trust in him.”
 And again,
 “Here am I and the children whom God has given me.”
¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he did not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Matthew 2:13-23

¹³ Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, 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.” ¹⁴ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

The Massacre of the Infants

¹⁶ When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. ¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah,
 wailing and loud lamentation,

Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

The Return from Egypt

¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ²⁰ “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” ²¹ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. ²³ There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazarene.”

SERMON.

Through the services of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, with song and praise, we celebrated the birth of Jesus. We wondered at the unassuming and humble nature of his arrival, while joyously shouting the meaning of his coming. Yet today, only days later, the tone of the story shifts. The Saviour of creation flees the greatest threat to our life—death. In an effort to protect the infant Jesus from Herod’s violence, he and his parents become refugees.

The contrast is stark. Angels proclaim peace on earth, yet the world into which Jesus is born is anything but peaceful. The child who draws shepherds from their fields and magi from distant lands now escapes under the cover of night. The One who is Life itself is pursued by death before he can even speak his first words.

And in this flight, we learn something essential about God’s heart. Jesus does not enter the world insulated from its dangers—he enters fully into them. He knows the fear of displacement, the vulnerability of depending on the kindness of strangers, the uncertainty of a future shaped by forces beyond one’s control. The Holy Family becomes a refugee family. The Saviour of the world becomes the hunted. The Lord of all becomes the one who must be sheltered.

This is not a footnote in the story of salvation. It *is* the story of salvation. God chooses to stand with those who are threatened, uprooted, and afraid.

As we look at our world today, the parallels are painfully clear. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 117 million people were forcibly displaced by mid-2025 due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations². Other analyses place the figure even higher—up to 120 million by early 2024³. Of

² UNHCR. (2025). *Figures at a glance*. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/figures-glance>

³ StatRanker. (2025). *Refugee crises: Causes, statistics, and solutions in 2025*.

<https://statranker.org/migration/refugee-crises-causes-statistics-and-solutions-in-2025/>

these, approximately 43.4 million are recognised as refugees, people who have crossed borders because home is no longer safe.⁴

Behind these numbers are stories not unlike the Holy Family's. Families fleeing conflict in Syria, Ukraine, Sudan, and Myanmar. Communities uprooted by persecution in Afghanistan, Eritrea, and among the Rohingya people. Entire regions are destabilised by climate-driven disasters—floods, droughts, and storms that destroy homes and livelihoods. Children who make up 40% of the world's displaced people, though they are only 30% of the global population.⁵

These are not statistics to be pitied from afar. They are the faces in whom Christ has chosen to be revealed. The lives through which Jesus lives. When Jesus becomes a refugee, he forever identifies himself with those who flee danger. When the Holy Family seeks shelter in Egypt, God declares that the vulnerable are not an afterthought—they are at the very centre of the divine story.

So, what does this mean for those who call themselves Christian?

First, it means we cannot look away. If God enters the world as a refugee, then the suffering of displaced people is not a political issue to be debated but a theological reality to be confronted. To ignore them is to ignore Christ.

Second, it means our compassion must be active. Scripture does not say that Joseph simply prayed for safety; he *got up*, took the child, and fled. Love moves. Love protects. Love acts. For us, that may mean advocating for humane refugee policies, supporting resettlement programs, partnering with organisations that provide shelter and legal aid, or simply cultivating communities where newcomers are welcomed with dignity.

Finally, it means hope is never lost. The same God who guided the Holy Family through danger is present with every family on the move today. And God calls the Church to be part of that hope—to be Egypt for those who flee Herod's violence, to be a place of refuge, safety, and new beginnings.

The Christmas story does not end at the manger. It continues on the road, in the dark, with a family seeking safety. And it continues wherever God's people choose to stand with the displaced, the vulnerable, and the afraid. Jesus came to bring salvation, not through magic but love reflected in generosity and a willingness to even die for us. We as Christians are called to give nothing more. May we not be found hoarding the gifts of the Lamb at the expense of others.

Let us pray

⁴ StatRanker, 2025

⁵ StatRanker, 2025

God of refuge and hope, shelter all who flee danger.
Strengthen our compassion, deepen our courage,
and make us bearers of your mercy.
As you protected the Holy Family,
guide us to protect the vulnerable in your name. Amen.