

## **MEETING GOD IN THE STRANGER**

*Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.  
Romans 15:7*

### **PRESENCE OF GOD**

We pause and remember that our God is an awesome God  
Who loves His daughters and sons with an everlasting love  
and continually abides with us wherever we find ourselves  
no matter what nationality we are or to what economic group we belong.  
All praise and honor, glory and thanks to You, O Most Holy Trinity.

### **LEVITICUS 19:33-34**

1. When a foreigner or stranger resides with you in your land,
2. Do not mistreat such a one.
1. You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently
2. 2. 2. Than the natives born among you;
1. You shall love the stranger as yourself;
2. For you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt.

### **SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 18:1-14**

The Lord appeared to Abraham as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said:

“Sir,\* if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest under the tree. Now that you have come to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.” “Very well,” they replied, “do as you have said.” Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, “Quick, three measures\* of bran flour! Knead it and make bread.” He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice calf, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. Then he got some curds\* and milk, as well as the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them, waiting on them under the tree while they ate.

“Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him. “There in the tent,” he replied. One of them\* said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son.” Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, just behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years, Sarah laughed\* to herself. The Lord said to Abraham: “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really bear a child, old as I am?’ Is anything too marvelous for the Lord to do? At the appointed time, about this time next year, I will return to you, and Sarah will have a son.”

The Word o f the Lord!

### **REFLECTION**

While God meets me especially in my time of quiet and reflection, as the Bible shows, it is true to the Scriptures as well to realize how God comes also in the voice and face of the stranger. The stranger, the ‘sojourner’, the person of different background and faith, has a special place in the Old Testament, and is to be respected and shown hospitality. Then in the New Testament, in the gospels, we see Jesus encountering the stranger or foreigner in significant ways. He has a profound meeting with the Samaritan woman, for instance (John 4:1-42). He also heals the servant of the Roman centurion, of whom He says ‘not even in Israel have I found faith as great as this’ (Luke 7:9). And, most movingly, Jesus’ own human consciousness is challenged

and stretched by a complete outsider, the courageous Canaanite woman, whose little daughter is tormented by a devil. In his human consciousness, He learns from her something He had not fully grasped before - about the expansion of his ministry beyond the confines of Israel. As a result of her courage, after His initial hesitation He reaches out to her, and cures her little child. 'You have great faith' He says to her in utter admiration (Matthew 15:28). So, in my prayer of quiet, let me think of the strangers, the 'different' people I have encountered, who have perhaps challenged my faith perspective, and called me to look at things in a new way. Perhaps, in some of those meetings, God was especially coming to me, calling to me, expanding the horizons of my heart?

*INTERCESSIONS: Response: LORD OF ALL PEOPLE, HEAR US.*

† For migrant workers, that they may labor in safe and just conditions, and that we who benefit from their labor may be truly grateful for what they provide, we pray to the Lord:

† For an end to human trafficking, that the dignity of all God's children will be protected, we pray to the Lord:

† For migrants, refugees and strangers in our midst, that they may find hope in our concern for justice, and feel the warmth of our love, we pray to the Lord:

† For all those overwhelmed by loneliness, poverty, and despair, that they may be comforted through our help and kindness, we pray to the Lord:

† For those in special need, that the Lord in His Divine mercy may heal the sick, comfort the dying, and keep travelers safe, we pray to the Lord:

#### **A FOREIGNER'S PRAYER**

I wear the mark of your disapproval  
and your often unspoken words  
pierce straight to my soul,  
"Why didn't you stay where you belong?"  
I feel the icy stare that says,  
"Keep your distance, you foreigner,  
with your different-colored skin  
and your strange-sounding speech,  
with your culture, food, religion, and clothing  
that are inferior to my own."  
I'm an immigrant, a wetback, an alien, an outsider  
Dear God, help us to remember  
that when we speak of immigrants and refugees,  
we speak of Christ.  
In the One Who had no place to lay His head,  
and in the least of His brothers and sisters,  
You come to us again, a Stranger seeking refuge.  
We confess that we often turn away.

#### **PRAYER**

*Lord, give us the eyes of Jesus  
to see our neighbors and the strangers we meet.  
Teach us what it means to love the stranger as we love ourselves.  
Forgive us for our selfishness, for our silence,  
for not caring enough for the strangers who come to our communities.  
Teach us to love and care for the stranger the way You do. Amen!*