

Eleventh International Migrants Day - 18 December, 2010

An Ecumenical Worship Service by Rev Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes

Rationale:

On 4 December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly, taking into account the large and increasing number of migrants in the world, proclaimed 18 December as International Migrants Day. On 18 December 1990, the General Assembly had adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

United Nations Member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are invited to observe International Migrants Day through the dissemination of information on the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants, and through the sharing of experiences and the design of actions to ensure their protection.

The 132 Member States that participated in the General Assembly's High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development on 14-15 September 2006 reaffirmed a number of key messages. First, they underscored that international migration was a growing phenomenon and that it could make a positive contribution to development in countries of origin and countries of destination provided it was supported by the right policies. Secondly, they emphasized that respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all migrants was essential to reap the benefits of international migration. Thirdly, they recognized the importance of strengthening international cooperation on international migration bilaterally, regionally and globally.

From the *Secretary-General last year*:

"On this tenth International Migrants Day, I encourage Governments to protect the human rights of migrants, to put human rights at the heart of migration policy, and to raise awareness of the positive contributions migrants make to the economic, social and cultural lives of their host countries".

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
Message for International Migrants Day*

18 December 2009

Prelude – Any music from a country that is not yours

Call to Worship

Who are we?

We are all immigrants in this world.

Where did we come from?

We came from everywhere. We came from our ancestors' wombs, those who prepared the way for us all.

Where do we find our worth?

Our worth is not in documents or passports but in God's holy name.

Where is our home?

Our home is in God's unfenced, undocumented and gracious kingdom. Our home is next to each other, in each others arms.

What are we doing here today?

We are here to praise God for God's unbounded grace, mercy and love.

Let us worship God.

Let us worship God.

Opening Prayer from an Immigrant:

O holy God, Heart of heaven and earth, praised be your holy name. Your daughters and sons, from all peoples of the world, regardless of borders, praise you.

We praise you and give you thanks because you have placed in our hands the immigrant pilgrims who make the earth flourish and produce, to bring food to the table of the rich and the poor alike.

We praise you and give you thanks because you walk always with those who cross borders, in search of well-being, doing their part in building the world you entrusted to us. On our way, we are mindful of your Presence in the promise to Abraham and Sarah and in the liberation of your people, Israel.

We praise you and give you thanks for your blessings on all immigrants, on those who cross all the borders in the United States.

And you, O Lord of justice, love and compassion, be always our protector and intercessor for reconciliation and the building of equality and peace. Amen.

* Adapted from a prayer by Remigio Hernández, an immigrant to the United States.

Hymn – Pues Si Vivimos / When We Are Living

Presbyterian Hymnal Number 400

1. When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus,
And when we're dying, it is in the Lord.
Both in our living and in our dying,
We belong to God, we belong to God.
2. Through all our living, we our fruits must give.
Good works of service are for offering.
When we are giving, or when receiving,
We belong to God, we belong to God.
3. Mid times of sorrow and in times of pain,
When sensing beauty or in love's embrace,
Whether we suffer, or sing rejoicing,
We belong to God, we belong to God.
4. Across this wide world, we shall always find
Those who are crying with no peace of mind,
But when we help them, or when we feed them,
We belong to God, we belong to God.

1. Pues si vivimos para Él vivimos
Y si morimos para Él morimos.
Sea que vivamos o que muramos,
Somos del Señor, somos del Señor.
2. En esta vida, frutos hemos de dar
Las obras buenas son para ofrendar.
Ya sea que demos o que recibamos
Somos del Señor, somos del Señor.
3. En la tristeza y en el dolor,
En la belleza y en el amor,
Sea que suframos o que gocemos
Somos del Señor, somos del Señor.
4. En este mundo, hemos de encontrar
Gente que llora y sin consolar.
Sea que ayudemos o que alimentemos
Somos del Señor, somos del Señor.

Prayers of the People - at this point people can pray for what they feel needed in regards to immigrant situations locally and globally. Bring statistics, stories and weave them into your prayers. Start reading together the prayer below:

Creator God,

open our eyes so we can see you in the eyes of our immigrant brothers and sisters, eyes downcast for having lived so long in the shadows, eyes challenging us to join them in the streets or picket lines, eyes lifted looking for the Christ light in us.

Compassionate God,

who has come to dwell among us, open our ears to hear the cries of your children, children being separated from their parents, rounded up in raids, led to detention centers, silently giving up dreams.

God of Justice,

who crosses all boundaries, give us courage to resist, to say NO to unfair labor practices, to unjust laws like SB 1070, 287g contracts.

Give us the strength to stand with and for your inclusive love, faith to believe, another world is necessary and possible.

Immigration Prayer By Rev. Loren McGrail

Prayers of the People out loud –

Between each prayer repeat: **Let it begin with us.**

Prayer of Illumination

Bible reading - Use various scriptures related to immigration. Since it is close to Christmas you can use the story of Jesus and his parents who had to flee to protect their lives. Jesus and his parents were refugees in another territory, foreigners who had to hide from death. What if Christian churches become a manger for all Jesus brothers and sisters fleeing, moving and finding better ways to live and protect their families?

Sermon - At the bottom on this liturgy there are three meditations to help you expand the issue at hand. One is from Cláudio Carvalhaes, a story half invented half lived about a community struggling with immigration issues during Easter Sunday. A second one is from Jim Wallis on the DREAM ACT in US and the third one is by Leonardo Boff on a new beginning that requires a pedagogy based on a new awareness and an inclusive vision. Use those sources to feed your meditations. After the sermon we all respond by reading the creed below.

Creed for Immigrants

I believe in almighty God, who guided his people in exile and in exodus, the God of Joseph in Egypt and of Daniel in Babylon, the God of foreigners and immigrants.

I believe in Jesus Christ a displaced Galilean, who was born away from his people and his home, who had to flee the country with his parents when his life was in danger, and who upon returning to his own country had to suffer the oppression of the tyrant Pontius Pilate, the servant of a foreign power. He was persecuted, beaten, tortured and finally accused and condemned to death unjustly. But on the third day, this scorned Jesus rose from the death, not as a foreigner but to offer us citizenship in heaven.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the eternal immigrant from God's kingdom among us, who speaks all languages, lives in all countries, and reunites all races.

I believe that the church is the secure home for all foreigners and believers who constitute it, who speaks the same language and have the same purpose.

I believe that the communion of saints begins when we accept the diversity of the saints.

I believe in the forgiveness, which makes us all equal, and in the reconciliation, which identifies us more than does race, language or nationality.

I believe that in the Resurrection, God will unite us as one people in which all are distinct and all are alike at the same time.

I believe in the eternal life beyond this world, where no one will be an immigrant but all will be citizens of God's Kingdom that has no end.

Amen

Author: Rev. Jose Luis Casal

Eucharist

Welcome all, welcome to the table of God. This table belongs to the world, to those who are here and to those who are not here, past, present and future. For those who are on the way, about to arrive and for those whose journey has just began. This is God's table. A place of rest along the road. Come! Everyone is invited to rest, to eat and to drink and then hit the road again.

God be with you.
 And also with you.
 Lift up your hearts.
 We lift them up to God.
 Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
 It is right to give her thanks and praise.

The table always challenges us to give thanks. How thankful can you be at this table today? (ask people reasons for thanksgiving)

Oh God, we join our voices with all those who sing your praise

Gloria, Gloria Gloria! Gloria to you oh God who hosts us all here!

So much begins in the desert. A place of exile and wandering, of temptation and tribulation, the desert is haunted by absence and loss. The specter of death stalks you in the desert. It is not just the danger of losing your way in trackless terrain or even the threat of thirst; it is a different peril all the more ominous because it is so elusive. In the desert, the unnamable approaches without ever arriving. We see things, odd things in the desert... You cannot know yourself until you venture into the desert alone, and then you learn that to find yourself is to lose yourself. In the desert we dream dreams and hope to arrive safe somewhere.

We remember Jesus (BREAD)

After having been in the desert and having starved, after having known and lost himself, he gathered his friends for a meal, a place to talk about the desert and its dangers, and how we get lost and can die. Then, as if the meal was done in the midst of the desert,

he took bread, perhaps starving,
 blessed it, perhaps surrounded by fear,
 broke it among friends and traitors, to remind us that God meets us in the midst of our brokenness in the desert, with people we know and do not quite know
 Gave it to his friends, all of them, as he give his life to us, all of us, no matter our citizenship status
 And said:

DO THIS in memory of me, every time you are in the desert, among those who have no legal documents, whoa re running for life, who are trying to feed their families.

We remember Jesus (WINE)

Still in the desert, he took the cup, perhaps so thirsty, so dizzy, so hot, so cold.
 Blessed it, as he would bless any sign of strength in the desert, as if this was the food to strengthen them to continue no matter what!
 And said

DRINK IT in memory of me, every time the desert is in you, when the world is saying NO, this wine from heaven says YES!

Let us pray:

God of the desert, bless this bread and this drink and give us your strength when we are in the desert. Help us not to despair when we see things, when we face loss, when we have nowhere else to turn, when we find and when we lose ourselves.

GOD OF MERCY, COME TO US, BE HERE WITH US AT THIS TABLE, GRANT US PEACE. HEAL OUR WOUNDS

Song – Somos del Senor

Sharing the bread and the wine. Now we gather everybody around the table and we serve each other while we sing.

After the meal we pray the Lord's Prayer

We all say Isaiah 30: 41 several times until we can say it by heart:

“but those who wait for the Holy One shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Final Song – The Summons, by John L. Bell

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
 Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?
 Will you let my love be shown? Will you let my name be known,
 will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?
 Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?
 Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare?
 Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?
 Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?
 Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,
 and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide if I but call your name?
 Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?
 Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around,
 through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
 Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
 In Your company I'll go where Your love and footsteps show.
 Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Charge

Now brothers and sisters. Don't forget that there are 200 million people waking around the globe. We as churches of Jesus Christ need to help defuse public hostility towards them. More than that we must provide hospitality to people in Jesus name. Go to your churches and figure out together how to welcome people in our midst!

Benediction

May you go to the world looking for those who don't have a place to stay. Let you be reminded that Joseph and Mary had to run for their lives and the life of his son. Remember that Jesus was born out of his own place and never found a place to rest his head. And remember that we are all immigrants in this world, going to our heavenly home in God's heart. Open the doors for each other, prepare a table for each other and offer hospitality to all without asking for their documents or their origin. May the peace of Christ be with us all.

Meditations:

FIRST - Eucharist and Pilgrimage in Guatemala

It was Easter day. The church was getting filled at 6 o'clock and there were incense going on around this church made of indigenous people from Guatemala. People were gathering at the sanctuary and making conversation as they prepared for the service. Children were already running around playing with each other. The band got their space and people started to winding down their talks. A man came to the microphone and said: "Buenos dias hermanas y hermanos. (Good morning brothers and sisters) We are here today very early in the morning to remember the day when the women went to Jesus tomb just to find out that the tomb was empty. Alleluia! We are here at this Easter Sunday to celebrate that the tomb is empty, that the women saw Jesus resurrected and that Jesus won death forever. Praise be to God!" He prayed and invited people to sing.

After a time of singing hymns and coritos, people sat down and the pastor started to preach from the pulpit: "Hermanos y hermanas, in the midst of the life that Jesus gave to us, we must remember our brothers and sisters who died trying to cross the desert looking for a better life for their families. We must remember those who are still on its way and we haven't heard from them anymore. We must remember those who cannot come back and those who have no means to try a new life. We must remember the families that stayed here and are fractured by the absence of a mother, a father, a son, or going through illness without means to be treated. As we remember Jesus Christ, the way he passed from life to death and back to life again, the Passover is very important for us too. Because like the Hebrews in Egypt, who were trying to find a promised land, we are too trying to pass-over the desert both ways to keep our families fed and alive. Sometimes the crossing of the desert for us is like the cross of Jesus Christ, crossing from death to life, being crossed by so many border fences, injustices, and with a high price to pay. The sacrifice of Jesus becomes our sacrifice as we also try to search for more just ways to live. Ai hermanos y hermanas, we all belong to Jesus, who cross-ed so many borders and distances, hatreds and antagonisms, self-righteousness and arrogance. In Jesus, an migrant himself, we understand ourselves. It is through his cross and the cross-ing over so many borders that his life, death and resurrection entails that we understand our attempts to cross whatever prevents us from

having a dignified life.

Let us not forget that Easter was only possible because of Good Friday! So, if you are cross-ing the desert alone or with your family in the future, among bandits and robbers and drug-dealers, don't forget that we must keep the promise of Easter and the hope of a new life! Let us pray for all of those who are passing/crossing over places and doing it for the love of their families. Let us pray that God gives them and us, cross-er people, a promised land as well, be it here, in our pilgrimage or anywhere else..."

He paused, took a breath, and said "Let us pray..." As the church started to pray, the space was filled with loud prayers and soon, overflowing tears. For about an hour, people prayed alone, then together, then alone again, standing, shouting, jumping up and down, crying quietly on bent knees, supplicating God's mercy and favor towards them and their families. We could hear several people asking for children without fathers and mothers, and for those who were deported and had nothing else to do in their homeland; for kids who learned about gangs in the U.S., were deported to their countries, and started violent gangs; for women raped and abused by coyotes (people who lead migrants across the border) and border patrol police along the desert. . . . We could hear about split families, torn down by the lack of jobs, threatened by people who land them money to cross the desert but had to come back home without any success, couples estranged by such a long time without seeing each other... The prayers made the building become heavy and after a while the movements started to slow down.

As the prayers started to lose intensity, people sat down and remained sat in the pews. A deep silence took the worship space and the whole congregation didn't said a word or made a move... After what seemed to be a very long time, the pastor came to the Eucharistic table and helped by two women, uncovered the bread and the wine for the Eucharist. The pastor said: "Hermanos y hermanas, hay aqui alguno que quiera dar un testimonho? (Brothers and sisters, is there anybody here who wants to give a testimony?) People were so tired that very surprisingly, silence was kept intact. From the table the pastor continue: "Don't give up! God has given us life! God has provided for the journey. Look and see, we have food for the journey! Especially at this Easter day, as we eat and drink this food, we MUST remember and never forget that life is bigger than death! No matter what you or your family are going through, or where you might be in your pilgrimage, there is promise of life for you to keep going. Today is the

Easter of our Lord Jesus Christ and because of Jesus, it is our own Easter as well!

Like the women who went to the tomb, we are called to go there and see that our Lord is risen! Let us keep going brother and sisters. We cannot stop or we will die before time like so many of our people! Here at this table are the signs and the promises of our new life, life always renewed to us. Like Jesus with his disciples and friends, it is the eating and drinking together that help us continue our journey. Here we stop and renew our strength, here we stop and find rest, here we stop and gain new perspectives, here we stop and are reminded that we are not alone, that God almighty is with us and that the church of Jesus Christ, God's family is with us, here in Guatemala, in El Salvador, in Honduras, in Mexico and in Estados Unidos.

As we are about to eat this bread and drink this wine, remember the powerful life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus fought against the injustices of his time and was killed. Now, in Jesus' memory, get your portion of strength and renewal and transformation and go back to the road trusting that God in Jesus, through the work of the Holy Spirit will walk with you, will be part of your pilgrimage and will give you a new Jerusalem, a promised land here and also when you die. See, we can still be thankful to God's love in our lives can we? Let us do this: as you take a piece of this bread, give it to somebody else and receive it from somebody else as a gesture of our life together, of our dependence on each other, as a reminder that we are not alone and that is here in our midst through each other. And raising the bread he said, "the night when Jesus had his last supper with his friends..."

Cláudio Carvalhaes

* This piece is part of a larger article that will be published at *Interpretation, A Journey of Bible and Theology*, Richmond, Virginia, Spring, 2011.

SECOND – DREAM ACT

Today is a day of hope for immigration reform. More than 500 immigration activists and faith leaders have gathered in Washington, D.C. to call on Congress to act on immigration reform. They represent the tens of thousands of you reading SojoMail today who, over the past few years, have taken action on immigration reform. It has been a long road, and a tough fight. But your actions make a difference. Due, in part, to this

ongoing pressure, Senator Harry Reid announced yesterday that the DREAM Act will be voted on as early as next week. The DREAM Act is bi-partisan legislation that allows young people who have been raised in the United States, excelled in school, and then pursued higher education or service in the military to have a pathway to citizenship.

Committed Christians will always disagree on public policy issues, but I have been encouraged by the broad spectrum of leaders who have found common ground on the moral issues at stake in reforming our immigration system. If you are still uncertain as to how immigration connects to your faith, I encourage you to take a look at some of Sojourners' many resources on the topic, which include a [primer on how our immigration system currently works](#), [a study guide for your church](#), and a [movie guide for discussing faith and immigration reform](#). To all of you who have committed yourself to this issue, I now share with you the words of hope that I shared with those who came to D.C. today:

For people of faith there is a moral responsibility to hope. That's always our job, even when the political winds are against us. Those of us who build our lives on hope have a calling, and a vocation, to spread that hope because, when we do prevail in the cause of justice, it is always hope which has kept our hearts alive until victory finally comes. Today is not just about the current political realities of comprehensive immigration reform; it is about being evangelists for hope — it is about putting our faith into action. Our faith is always personal, but never private. Today is about personal faith and public action.

We are here today because there is no such thing as an illegal human being. We are all, first, children of God, endowed with the image of our creator and deserving of respect. In the first two chapters of the Bible, we learn that it is in God's image that we are created, and in the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence, we hear that equality does not come from government but from God. It does not find its source in any law or constitution, it does not come from the color of your skin or the land in which you were born, but from the truth that should be self-evident — that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We believe in the rule of law, but we also understand that it is these things that are the purpose of the law. When the law no longer fulfills this purpose, it is unjust and must be

reformed.

Any good public policy must be based upon respect for your fellow human beings as children of God. It must be based upon respect for family and community. But today, we recognize and remember that every day 1,100 people are being deported — 1,100 people. For us, 1,100 is not a statistic, a talking point, or just another campaign issue. This number represents our parishioners, our neighbors, our brothers and sisters, our family and friends. It represents families that are torn apart, lives that are disrupted, and dreams that are shattered. It breaks our hearts to know that somewhere there is a 7-year-old crying for her dad, who was deported, to come home. I know this girl's tears break the heart of God, and they should break the hearts of our lawmakers and give them the motivation to fight for respect, relief from cruel deportation policies, and meaningful reform.

It has been a long, hard road in fighting for immigration reform. The people here today know that better than anyone else. Hebrews 11 says faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. My best paraphrase of that verse is that hope is believing in spite of the evidence, and then watching the evidence change.

Brothers and sisters, faith leaders and immigrant rights activists are here because of our faith, and we will continue to act in hope until the evidence changes.

The politicians, the media, and the pundits say, "Not yet. Just be patient. Wait for the political climate to change, or for this election to pass. It's the other party's fault. If everyone just votes for me and my party all these problems will be solved." I am sure that abolitionists heard this, labor leaders, and civil rights leaders were told this time and time again. It may be the job of politicians to have these considerations and make these pronouncements, but it is our job to keep on fighting anyway. We ignore the excuses because we know that it does not have to be this way. We ignore them because we are not here to follow the political winds, but we are here to change them. We ignore them, and we're not going away just because this is hard. Our hope will outlast their political cynicism and maneuvering. We ignore them because we are people of hope who believe in spite of the evidence and then watch the evidence change.

Jim Wallis - <http://blog.sojo.net/2010/09/15/no-one-is-illegal/>

THIRD – Actualize our Pedagogy in a Changed World

Centuries of wars, struggles and class conflicts among people are leaving a bitter lesson. The primary and reductionist method has not made us more human, not brought us closer to each other, much less brought us what we longed for: peace. We live in a permanent state of siege and fear. Having reached a historic level, the words of the Earth Charter "beckons us to a new beginning." This requires a pedagogy based on a new awareness and an inclusive vision of the economic, social, cultural and spiritual challenges. This new awareness, a result of globalization, earth science and life and also of the ecology is showing us a path to follow: to understand that all things are interdependent and open, and even the oppositions are not out of a whole dynamic. Therefore, we need not to separate but to compose, include rather than exclude, and to acknowledge the differences, as well as to seek out similarities. Instead of win-lose, to seek the win-win.

This holistic perspective has been influencing the educational processes. We have an unforgettable teacher, Paulo Freire, who taught us the dialectic of inclusion and to put the "and" where we laid before the "or." We must learn to say yes to everything that makes us grow in the small and in the large.

Friar Clodovis Boff gained much experience working with the poor in Acre and Rio de Janeiro. In the wake of Paulo Freire, he handed us a book that became a classic: "Working with the people." And now, as we meet the challenges of the new world situation, he produced a small decalogue of what could be a renewed pedagogy. It is worth transcribing it and consider it because it can help us a great deal. 3271-3282

1. Yes to the process of awareness, the awakening of critical awareness and use of analytical reason (head). But also yes to the sensitive reason (heart) where the values take roots and where they imagination and all utopias are feed.
2. Yes the "collective subject" or social, to the "we" creator of history ("no one frees anybody, we are liberated together"). But also yes to the subjectivity of each one of us, the "biographical I," the "individual subject" with its references and dreams.
3. Yes to the "political praxis," transforming structures and generating new social relations of a new "system". But also yes to the "cultural practice" (symbolic, artistic and

religious), "transfiguring" the world and creating new meanings, or simply a new "life-world."

4. Yes to the "macro" action or societal (in particular the "revolutionary action"), that which acts on the structures. But also yes to "micro" action, local and communal ("molecular revolution") as the basis and starting point of the structural process.

5. Yes to the articulation of social forces in the form of "unifying structures and centralized. But yes also to the articulation in "network" in which each decentralized action, each node becomes the center of creation, of initiatives and interventions.

6. Yes to the "critique" of the mechanisms of oppression, to denounce injustice and the "work of the negative." But also yes to the "alternatives" proposals, to affirmative actions that espouse the "new" and herald a different future.

7. Yes to the "historic project", the concrete "political program" that points to a "new society". But yes also to "Utopia," the dreams of the "creative imagination" in search of a different life, in short, a "new world".

8. Yes to "fight," to work, to the effort to make progress, and yes to the seriousness of the commitment. Also yes to the "gratuity" as manifested in the game, in the free time, or simply the joy of living.

9. Yes to the ideal of being a "citizen" of being "militant" and "fighter", yes to those who give themselves full of enthusiasm and courage, the cause of the humanization of the world. But also yes to the figure of "animator", the "companion", the "friend" and in simply words, yes to those who are rich in humanity, freedom and love.

10. Yes to an "analytical" and scientific conception of society and its economic and political structures. Also yes to the "systemic" and "holistic" view of reality, seen as a living totality, and dialectically integrated in its various dimensions: personal, gender, social, ecological, planetary, cosmic and transcendent. "

Leonardo Boff

<http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia.asp?lang=PT&cod=50870>

More information on World Council of Churches work on migration:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/migration-and-social-justice.html>