



Advent 2018

Week 4

Accompany refugees this Advent

“Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, “Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured by a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy”.”

Luke 1:41-44.

Our Gospel reading this week tells the story of the joyous meeting of two expectant mothers. This is something we have been accustomed to at JRS, with several of our refugee friends giving birth this year. Hearing the story of Mary and Elizabeth, I can envision the scene clearly in my mind, imagining the emotion that must have been so overwhelming, causing John the Baptist to leap in his mother’s womb.

However, we know that for both sets of parents in today’s Gospel, the news of the impending arrivals was also the source of uncertainty, particularly for Mary who received the perplexing news of her pregnancy from the angel Gabriel. Uncertainty is something our friends at JRS are all too familiar with during their pregnancies. Being subjected to forced destitution means that they worry how they might prepare the necessities that a newborn needs. Many of our friends have unstable accommodation arrangements that leave them vulnerable to street homelessness, particularly as the state has no obligation to house pregnant women until their child is born. The threat of healthcare charges may mean some do not access the antenatal care that is so vital. The knowledge that they will give birth to their child in a country which tells them they are not welcome and treats them with hostility must be so burdensome. All this robs our friends of the total joy and excitement the news of a child ought to bring.

Despite these worries, just like for the parents in our Gospel story today, God’s love comes rushing in for our friends. Charities that JRS partner with provide the bottles, clothes and pushchairs that they need to care for their children. JRS can help those who need accommodation find somewhere safe to stay. Most importantly, these parents receive the loving care and attention of staff, volunteers and particularly their friends from the day centre to support them. They receive the love and friendship we see Mary and Elizabeth share in the Gospel today; a love and friendship that can provide the welcome our friends deserve.

The greatest joy of my time working at JRS has been meeting the newest additions to our family here in East London. Each little one is the product of their loving creator, each one a sign of God’s love for his children. Each one bears a striking resemblance to a baby born into uncertain circumstances in Bethlehem, the birth which the world is so eagerly waiting to celebrate in the next days.

This last weekend before my first Christmas working at JRS, I feel more appreciative than ever of the love of a God who took up human flesh as a precious little baby, born to a family for whom there was no place in the inn.

○ Emmanuel, you are love itself. In this last few days of waiting, may we commit ourselves to making your love known in our families, communities and society; especially to those who are made to feel unloved.



/jesuitrefugeeserviceuk



@JRSUK

JRS UK, 2 Chandler Street, London, E1W 2QT
020 7488 7310 | uk@jrs.net | www.jrsuk.net



JRS UK is a work of the Jesuits in Britain, registered charity in England & Wales, 230165, and Scotland, 40490