



## Wednesday Prayer

### Baptism of Our Lord Sunday – Finding the Nativity

**Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you... you are precious in my sight. ~ from Isaiah 43**

For several weeks, perhaps even months, I have ignored the plight of people who are homeless as *the theme* for this year's [Christmas] letter. It seemed too political. But the topic just keeps coming up in conversations, mailings, dreams, news feeds, programs, phone calls and as I go to and from exercise classes, events at church and the grocery store. So, I decided to not ignore the issue.

Recently I presented a program for the annual Bethel Christmas Tea. In the "play" Mary, Joseph and Jesus are depicted as modern-day refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, as of December 2023 there were currently over 117.3 million people that have been displaced from their homes because of famine, war, environmental disaster or their lives being threatened. Mary and Joseph fled to save the life of their child – Jesus. That is what millions of refugees and asylum seekers are trying to do, to save their own life and the life of their children. I often ask myself "What would I do to save the life of my child?"

On Tuesdays I make mission quilts with a couple dozen other women. Sometimes these quilts turn out lovely. We sell those to raise funds for various charities. Other times the patchwork is quite an eye dizzying piece of assemblage. But it is still a quilt that will be given to someone in need. Once in a while as we are working on an interesting quilt (meaning not so lovely), someone will comment that it doesn't matter what it looks like because it is "an under the bridge" quilt and "won't look like much once it has been washed in the river." The first few times I let the comments go but I don't anymore. Information from Cherish All Children educated me that a high percentage of people living unhoused have been abused. That is someone's loved one "under the bridge." And that is where you find Jesus, living under the bridge or fleeing their home to save the life of their child.

When I drive by someone standing on a corner with a sign that says "Please help, anything helps" it rips at my heart and usually brings a blur to my vision. What is their story? Who are they? Recently the Bethel Lutheran youth assembled tote bags of socks, snacks, a bottle of water, hand warmers, and other items. We could take a bag and pass it along to someone who might need it, like someone standing on a street corner. The youth were excited about this project. Two kids that I talked to said "we just don't know what else to do." I said I felt the same way, and this is something we can do. One of the quilters recently said she's been taking a few of the quilts and when she sees someone at a corner she gives them one. It is what these quilts are for. It's doing something.

I've never been without a home but more than once I visited my older brother by the tree that he lived under for a few years in the middle of a parking lot in Las Vegas. When I see someone on the street corner, there is my brother, in more than one way, under a tree, at some border or in a refugee camp, shelter, or under a bridge.

**God you have called us by name and we are all precious in your sight. Amen.**

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Written by Kathy Bolin, Women of the ELCA, SE MN Synod, used with permission from her Christmas letter.