A CHILD IS BORN TO US. AND A SON IS GIVEN TO US; HIS SCEPTER OF POWER RESTS UPON HIS SHOULDER, AND HIS NAME WILL BE CALLED:

MESSENGER OF GREAT COUNSEL! ...INTROIT: ISAIAH

On the last Sunday of Advent, I asked the women present at my home mass, what it was like to be pregnant and give birth the first time, as Mary did.

The word that surfaced most was "a miracle."

So every birth is a miracle!

As was the first Christmas birth.

And at Bethlehem, Christ did not come down from heaven. Rather he came up and out of the earth: an earthy miracle:

"...let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour!" Isaiah

GIFTEDNESS:

The Primal Christmas gift is the Christ Child.

And Christmas is the Feast of Gitedness.

And whatever we give at Christmas we give out of our essential goodness and

giftedness.

At Christmas, our time, our talent, our treasure overflow to those around us.

and in our giving we are not diminished.

No, we are fulfilled.

At Christmas, Mary said "Yes!" to the gift of the child.

We need to say yes to being gifted by her child:

gifted with mercy, peace, and joy.

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Christmas did not have to be!

Nor did you nor I HAVE to be.

There was another Mary, our mother who said yes to giving us life.

and you and I became a gift.

And Everything is Gift!

So we come with the angels and the Shepherds.

We proclaim THANKS AND GLORY BE!

FOR ALL THAT IS GIFT IN OUR LIVES,

and so we pray:

"O Come all ye faithful,

joyful and triumphant,

come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem.

Come and behold him, born the King of angels!

O come let us adore!

O come let us adore!

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Dec. 27, Feast of the Holy Family

Never forget:

Jesus had no passport.

Jsus was undocumented.

Jesus was what we call today, "an illegal imigrant."

Joseph smuggled Mary and Jesus across their border into the country of Egypt!

In 1981 I journeyed accroos that same border into Egypt. I went into the slums of Cairo to reach the Church of the Flight Into Egypt.

There it stands to commemorate the presence of the child Jesus in exile.

As anti immigrant fever grips our land and imigrants are made the scapegoats of all our fears and prejudices, we should not forget who Jesus was, where he went and how he got there.

Nor should we forget where we came from and why our ancestors fled the "old country" as they would say.

And so we pray:

Our Lady of Refugees,

Our Lady of broken lives,

Our Lady of the displaced,

in this new year of Mercy,

let Mercy make a home in our hearts!

Give us open hearts,

open minds,

open arms.

Amen