

The movie "Nebraska" is up for an academy award. At its heart it is about the love of a son for his very flawed father. A good movie for this heart season, {Valentine Week} but in the real Nebraska, which has a town: Valentine, does love flourish as we would like to believe?



It is called "the Heartland" but is it all that it is cracked up to be?

In the Gospel today, Jesus says, "But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment."

But there are many out in the desert of Arizona and in the heartland of Nebraska who ARE angry with their brothers and sisters who they deride as "the illegals." And they cry loud and clear: "NO AMNESTY EVER!"

This was all played out last week in Fremont Nebraska. There an amendment was voted down that would have revised a statute which made it illegal to rent housing to such undesirable "illegals."

Fremont is a typical midwestern town, filled with "church people." Catholics and Lutherans predominate and church steeples reach up in the sky toward God up there, but are more like lances pointed at the hearts of these humans who are derided as "the illegals."

There would be no room in the inn in Fremont for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph if today they were escaping from Israel. For they had no papers, no passports and were only seeking a better life for their child Jesus. And they secretly crossed a national border, {Egypt} seeking refuge. They would certainly qualify for the derisive title: "illegals."

Added to the derision in Fremont is the derision showed by the Catholic Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, John Boehner, who refused to let Comprehensive Immigration reform advance. And this reform was put together by a bi-partisan group of Senators including Republicans John McCain and Jeff Flake of Arizona who see this issue as a human problem.

Can Catholics who shout, "NO AMNESTY!" likewise expect amnesty from Jesus, our final judge who states clearly in today's gospel:

"Whoever is angry with his brother is liable to judgement?"

We need to put a face to the "illegals" and see them as human beings like ourselves and as brothers and sisters in the faith. Instead of self rightously condemning them. For if we found ourselves in their straits we too would probably try to trudge across the desert to better the lives of our families.

This is a face that symbolizes a human undocumented person:



On March 29, our Kino Border Initiative planning group will host a dinner at St. Francis Xavier Parish to raise funds for a half way house that offers temporary shelter and food to some women who look like this one, and to many men who are expelled from the U.S. and who often arrive back in Mexico penniless.

At \$200 a plate, I am on the way to filling my table of eight. One good Samaritan, Joe Anderson has promised us to match every dollar we raise up to \$50,000!

So amid all the hearts and flowers of St. Valentine's Day, the hearts of many are being opened to the plight of the "least of our brothers and sisters." Praise God! and so we might pray:

"Saint Valentine, open the hearts of all the faithful to a spirit of hospitality. Deliver us from anger and a merciless spirit. Help us not to judge, lest we be judged.

Help us to make our land a genuine "Heartland." Amen"

Breakfast Question: Have I ever received amnesty... forgiveness?

Personal Reflection: What is the difference between a "hard heart" and a loving one?

