

## **Reflection for June**

### **Theme: New Beginnings**

Scripture Reference: Mt 2:13-15

After they had gone, Joseph had another dream. An angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "Get up now and flee to Egypt. Take Mary and the little child and stay there until I tell you to leave, for Herod intends to search for the child to kill him." So that very night he got up and took Jesus and his mother and made their escape to Egypt and remained there until Herod died. All of this fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through his prophet: I summon my Son out of Egypt.

*A traveller once visited the Master.*

*"I'm thinking of moving to this town", he said. "What's it like?"*

*The Master asked him: "What was your old town like?"*

*"It was dreadful. Everyone was hateful. I hated it."*

*The Master replied: "This town is very much the same. I don't think you should move here."*

*Disappointed the first man left. Not long after, another traveller came seeking the Master.*

*"I'm thinking of moving to this town. What's it like?"*

*The Master asked him: "What was your old town like?"*

*The second man responded: "It was wonderful. Everyone was friendly and I was happy. Just interested in a change now."*

*The Master said: "This town is very much the same. I think you will like it here."*

Moving can sometimes be an ordeal. How do you pack your entire life's belongings into a few boxes, knowing you will have to give away more than you can afford to keep? How do you say good bye to friends, companions and all you hold dear, only to start from scratch all over again? Sometimes moving involves a journey, but not necessarily so. Sometimes moving could simply mean a student having to change seats because her teacher said so, or a child having to move from her parent's bed to sleeping on her own, or just one friend moving closer to another friend to hold her hand in pain. And while moving can be inconvenient to say the least, it sometimes gives us that much needed impetus to start afresh, begin anew and turn a new life!

We see a lot of 'moving' in Scripture too. The Great Exodus is not the least of them. But of no less significance is Jesus moving to different towns or even for that matter his being "moved" with compassion when he saw the need and the faith of people.

And while this text from Scripture holds its true place in the Christmas Season, perhaps there is a lot to be gleaned from it in terms of our theme today. Let's dive into one of the most courageous and adventurous portions of Scripture.

“After they had gone...”

Incidentally, nothing new can begin until we are ready to let go of the old. Sure, the Magi being around would have been a joyful, hopeful, meaningful time for the young family. It would have been fascinating to hear of their journey, of how they had come looking for the Messiah bearing gifts of deep significance. But it was time to put to use the lessons learnt from the travel of the Magi in their own travel now. It was time for the calm and quiet stillness in their lives to pause and make way for the new journey that lay ahead of them, and despite the evident inconvenience this would have caused, it is what saved the Messiah’s life. *What is it that you need to let go of— friendships, responsibilities, titles, homes, even memories- to be able to step into your new beginning?*

Br Dermot Barrett, cfc, of happy memory had a rather unique, beautiful and well meditated definition for purgatory- In his understanding, purgatory was a place/state of letting go of the attachments, the ties, the bonds that still hold us to our life on Earth, so that we may enter into Heaven in complete freedom.

*What are the ties that are preventing you from living in freedom?*

Joseph had another dream

Joseph’s life is etched with dreams and him living them out in obedience. Now these were not necessarily the dreams *he* may have had for *himself*, but these were dreams implanted in his heart by the Lord and He fulfilled them in obedience.

Notice also the fact that it is *another* dream. Who said we are allowed only one great, life-changing dream in our lives? There is no age to stop dreaming and there is no number we can stop at! Remember when Yahweh promises to pour out his Spirit on all people... he says “*your old people will dream dreams*”. Do you consider yourself to be old? Well it’s time to start dreaming! And if you consider yourself to be young, inexperienced, hesitant, shy then remember “*your young people will see visions.*” It is time to envision a new tomorrow for your community and for your life!

***What dreams/ visions do you think the Lord is implanting in your heart? What are your dreams for your life, your community, your congregation?***

Get up now and flee

Notice the urgency in the command. A sleeping man must get on his feet at the very instant and flee! The immediacy in obedience is almost as important as obeying itself. Joseph didn’t have time to pack or plan for the journey. It had to be done, and done now, and done in a hurry.

*What are some of the decisions that we have been sitting over, responsibilities that we have taken too much time to act on? What are our reasons? Is it unwillingness, a feeling of being unequal to the task at hand, not being trusted, road- blocks, or just sheer inertia?*

While most movements do not necessarily mean you must flee from something, in some cases it may be true. *Have we got ourselves muddled into situations or dealings we are best away from? What is it we need to flee from to embrace the new beginnings that God is leading us to?*

Take Mary and the little child

We are never expected to leave *everything* behind and neither are we to take it *all*!

Sometimes we carry more than just our belongings. We carry our experience, our wisdom, our maturity, our joy for what has been and hope for what lies ahead.

And sometimes, we must get rid of the excess baggage. *Are there hurts, prejudices, unhappy memories that are best dealt with now, and not carried to our new destination?*

However, what holds true for Joseph holds true for us too. Wherever we go, whatever our dreams, we must *always* take Jesus and Mary with us!

and stay there until I tell you to leave

One would think, with all this hurried fleeing, at least they would finally have a permanent place. But that is never to be. Just as the Son of Man has no place to lay his head (*Mt 8:20*), rarely will there be a place we can call a permanent dwelling. Our movement is not to be permanent. We must move to a new place, a new role, a new responsibility, a new title knowing there will be a time we will be asked to leave it, for another new calling... and ultimately, we will leave it all for our One Home.

Until then, we are nomads, who travel light, but not hopeless wanderers, because we know where our Home is and we know the Way there.

What we must also know, however, that because our days are numbered, we must give our best to the roles and responsibilities entrusted to us and do our utmost wherever we are planted for in doing that, lives may be saved.

for Herod intends to search for the child to kill him.

The *thief* comes only to steal (our happiness and our peace among other things), to kill (all those little plans, those little dreams, those little goals, the ones whose roots are still not deep enough and can easily be uprooted) and destroy (everything from our souls to our communities and our vocation) (*Jn 10:10*). Sometimes our simple, obedient Yes's do more than what our big plans and hard labour in the kingdom can ever do!

*Have we noticed times when the Father of Lies has planted confusion, lies, discord, unforgiveness, break-down of communication in our communities? How can we flee from them? What new beginning could Jesus be inviting us into?*

So that very night he got up and took Jesus and his mother

The immediacy of Joseph's obedience comes forth in how he doesn't wait for it to be morning. That very night he escapes with his family. In speaking about Joseph, Fr Rolheiser says, "He shows how a person can be a pious believer, deeply faithful to everything within his religious tradition, and yet at the same time be open to a mystery beyond both his human and religious understanding."

Perhaps this was what put Joseph apart from his other Jewish counterparts. Their religiosity enslaved them, whereas Joseph's trust in God and his openness to the mystery that God is, set him free.

As Fr Rolheiser adds, "In essence what Joseph teaches us is how to live in loving fidelity to all that we cling to humanly and religiously, even as we are open to a mystery of God that takes us beyond all the categories of our religious practice and imagination."

It is but natural to cling on to our religious practices, our daily routines, even our friendships within the community, *but are we open to the mystery that God presents to us, when He asks to step outside of our comfort zones?*

All of this fulfilled what the Lord had spoken

All of Joseph's obedience, even the fear and inconvenience they were put through, were not just to flee an evil dictator, but for a greater cause- to fulfill the promise of God.

While the reasons for our movement, our anxieties, our inconveniences may seem like the whim of a superior, or simply bad luck, in all of that- there is a greater plan being fulfilled.

We laud Mary's Fiat (Yes) and rightly so for it changed the course of human history.

However, we must also know, that Joseph's life too, was a series of Yes's, not ones we *hear*

(for he doesn't speak in the Bible) but ones we *see*. While Mary's Yes is more passive (*let it be done to me...Lk 1:38*), Joseph's Yes is action-oriented. In our apostolate, we will need both- there will be times of passive yet whole hearted Yes's, where we let it be done to us in trust and surrender; and active yet well meditated Yes's which demand a physical response. We must not confuse the first with timidity or the latter with impulsiveness. It is not an either- or option we choose according to our personality type, but both that we will require in different situations and stages of our life.

I summon my Son out of Egypt.

As the Lord summoned his own Son out of something, he will call you too, His daughters, *out of something and also into something...*

*At this point in your life, what is the Lord calling you out of, and what is he leading you into?*

As the story mentioned in the beginning, our attitude will make a lot of difference in the new roles/ community/ responsibility that we are moving into. *What attitudes would you like to work on to be able to be more open and receptive to what the Lord is summoning you into?*

### **Questions for Reflection**

Recall incidents from your life which seemed daunting or scary at first, but which you now understand as God leading you into something extraordinary.

What does your new beginning look like and feel like to you right now?