

**March 12, 2017**

**Second Sunday of Lent**

**“All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you, O God”**

*This is a beautiful blessing, but do we include everyone in it?*

**Sometimes we do - Sometimes we don't**

I read an article this past week by Fr. [Elwin C. Schwab](#), parish administrator of [St. Charles Borromeo Parish](#) in Portland, Oregon. It is in the current issue of the National Catholic Reporter. I would like to share it with you because it provides an excellent description of what the blessing above looks like. Another reason I would like to share it is - Fr. Elwin is my cousin! The article is titled, *“Many languages and traditions, together before our God,”* and it shows the variety of cultures and people included in St. Charles Parish.

“[PORTLAND, ORE.](#) Thursday afternoon it started to snow. About two or three inches accumulated, and it warmed a bit, and melted a bit, and then the freezing rain began.

“Friday morning, everything was covered by ice, somewhat over half an inch. It was miserable to go anywhere, but I had to be at the church because we had Evelyn's viewing at 5 p.m., rosary at 6:30 p.m. and funeral Mass at 7 p.m. We spent the day scraping, shoveling and trying to make entering the church as safe as we could. Quite a few people came for the viewing, many more for the rosary and at least 200 for the Mass and reception that followed.

“Evelyn was born in the Philippines, and the readings at Mass and much of the music was in Tagalog, the language of her birth and family. At 10 a.m. the next morning, I presided at a wedding Mass for a couple who were born in Micronesia. Even though everything was still pretty icy and dangerous, some of the large family were able to attend the wedding. By good luck, the musicians got here, and we had the readings in Chuuk and all of the music in Chuuk and according to their traditions.

“As soon as the Mass was over and the pictures were taken, our Latino parishioners and members of our Multicultural Committee flooded in and started to set up for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the sounds of Mexican music and language were all through the church and hall.

“As we were starting our regular Saturday night Mass in English, our Eritrean parishioners were starting their rosary and prayers in the parish center, in their language, Tigrinya, with their traditions.

“Sunday morning, the church and gym were festive with decorations and altars to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mass began with a procession led by resplendent Aztec dancers, and music in Spanish coming from our community. The Mass with Spanish readings, prayers and music ended with a procession into the gym, again led by the Aztec dancers, and a joyous celebration of Mexican culture and food. The Aztec dancers mesmerized us with their powerful drumming and dancing in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is a way of praying that has been lost to our Northern European cultures.

“This is what a parish should be, a home where all of God's children pray in their languages and traditions, and we all join together before our God who understands us all.”

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*This is a beautiful blessing, but do we include everyone in it?*

### **Sometimes we do - Sometimes we don't**

This is an article by [Jonathan Luxmoore](#) in this same issue of the NCR titled, “*Eastern Europe's church leaders face growing criticism over refugees.*” It describes the difficulty the church in Eastern Europe is having in establishing this blessing.

“When church leaders from the Czech Republic and Slovakia met recently to discuss Europe's refugee crisis, their reluctance to help appeared to confirm a negative picture that's emerged over the past year.”

“Cardinal Dominik Duka of Prague, president of the Czech bishops' conference said, ‘*The whole history of humanity shows how uncontrolled migration causes violence and conflict, as well as economic and cultural collapse.*’

“President of the Slovak bishops' conference Archbishop Stanislav Zvolensky said, ‘*The larger the Muslim community, the likelier the violence — in such a situation, it's legitimate to ask about the religion these people profess, and how beneficial it is to our society. We shouldn't forget that Christianity and Islam are in permanent conflict. Once one side gains the upper hand, there's always conflict.*’

“Archbishop Henryk Hoser of Warsaw-Praga said Muslims would merely ‘*open ghettos which give birth to violence and terrorism.*’

### **Trying to include everyone**

“Some opposition is stirring belatedly in the Catholic church, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service and Caritas Europa who have insisted migrants and refugees deserve protection, while the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community has warned Christians they have a duty to help.”

### **Why do I bring this up?**

To be aware of the divisions within our church, within our country, and within ourselves, not so that we can blame or throw stones at those who are preventing this blessing. That doesn't help anybody. We don't know the situations eastern European countries have faced over the centuries; who are we to judge.

I bring this up to remind us all that peace with others is not going to be solved with the mind alone. We don't solve problems with the same mindset with which we created them. Peace starts in our hearts, but if we don't have peace there, we won't have peace in the world. It is within us that we encounter God most directly, that we find ourselves in the blessings of God. It isn't just the scriptures that say this - history does.

**You have made it clear, O Lord. All communities on the earth shall find blessing - in you.**

Let us pray for the countries in eastern Europe who are facing this crisis of immigration:

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and  
blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God,  
pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death,

**AMEN**