

**2013**

## **SEASON OF ADVENT**

### **Daily Reflections for Advent**



*Then Joseph got up and took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt (Mat 2:14)*

## **The World of Migrant Children and Youth**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FMSI thanks all those who have contributed to the production of this book of reflections for Advent. Many people have put their heart into this project: we thank the children and teens who have kindly shared their life experiences; thanks as well to their parents, who have allowed us to publish their children's stories. Thanks to all the FMSI contact persons in the provinces; this would not be possible without their help. We also thank the translators for their work, and their care in maintaining fidelity to the content of the stories received. We don't want to forget all those who have collaborated, helped and accompanied the editing of each story. Many thanks.

The central theme of the book this year is **migrant children, teens and young people**.

In 2012 the UN Committee in Geneva for the Rights of the Child had as its discussion theme in the annual debate on childhood, the situation of migration. Article 11 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that *"the State has the obligation fighting against the illicit transfer and detention of children abroad carried out by one of their parents or by a third party"*. With these reflections we wish to approach a little more the people that live with constant change and are not able to fully participate in their social rights.

*"For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."* (Source: Article 1, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). Considering that the theme was the object of the World Debate in 2012, in this publication we will use as elements of reflection, after the testimonies of children, the contributions of the civil society organizations to the "World Debate", as well as other UN documents.

Let's consider as an example of migration the Holy Family of Nazareth, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, who were obliged to quickly migrate to Egypt, facing all types of difficulties.

We hope that the testimonies here presented might help us to be more aware of the person of the migrant, to welcome them, to share our lives with theirs and, above all, to give them the help they need to become fully a part of society.

*Br. Vicente Sossai Falchetto fms*  
*Child Rights Advocacy Officer, FMSI Geneva.*

ADVENT has a twofold character – as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ’s first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ’s second coming at the end of time.

Advent is therefore a period for devout and joyful expectation.



## **"Migrant children must always be treated first and foremost as children"**

**François Crépeau**

*Special Rapporteur\* on the human rights of migrants*

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **"The rights of children in the context of international migration"**

In his introductory presentation on the day of the World Debate in September 2012, François Crépeau, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, emphasized that "Migrant children must always be treated first and foremost as children". Unfortunately, terms such as "illegal immigrants", still predominate in the majority of deliberations – language that “demonizes migrant children and leads to greater alienation, violence and xenophobia. ... No child is illegal, no human being is illegal. All children have their rights, independently of their status”.

Crépeau emphasized a series of aspects which should be given priority in the processing of the children of migrants, such as the registration of data, the training of migration authorities and a better coordination among the agencies. Referring to its report to the Council of Human Rights it emphasized the negative effects that the detention of parents has on their children, and added that the detention of migrant children in itself is also a serious problem.

He concluded by asking that detention be avoided as a matter of principle. Detention of families should occur only under very exceptional circumstances. It is within the competence of the State to develop special alternatives to detention and to the rights of children and young people based on its political focus, in the laws and practices to guarantee the fulfilment of the minimal and absolute obligations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Next two adolescents enriched the Debate. The first was Fatoumata, fourteen years old. She was the national delegate of the Association of Children and Youth Workers of Mali. She stressed the need for the authorities to continue working on the birth records and to improve the conduct of the personnel who enforce the laws. "I would like to request that all the adults here present listen to the children. Because if a child has a problem, the first person he or she will talk to will be a friend, instead of speaking with an adult. The local, national and international authorities should listen to the children and help them," she concluded.

The second was Sasima, 16 years old, who represented the Forum on Migration of the Children of Thailand. Sasima lives near the border between Thailand and Laos, and presented the matter of the “stateless” children and their struggle to have access to an education. She recommended that children automatically receive citizenship in the country in which they were born, that access to education should not be restricted only to the children of the country and that children should be protected during the entire process.

According to the testimony of children and youth in situations of international migration, the biggest problem that many have is facing the violence and extortion of the police. In addition, children are often denied access to basic services in the host countries. Karlsson spoke of the need for a global study of measures of international cooperation that would identify failures and contribute to a dialogue at the highest level on migration in the future.

### *World Debate 2012*

*\*A Special Rapporteur is an independent expert appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. This position is honorary and the expert is not United Nations staff nor paid for his/her work.*

## December 1

### First Sunday of Advent

#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 2: 1-5. The Lord will gather all nations in eternal peace of the Kingdom of God.

Romans 13: 11 – 14. The time has come, our salvation is near.

Matthew 24:37-44. Stay awake, you must be ready.

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**Benjamin Hamilton** - Age: 13  
New Zealand  
NSW, Australia

*My name is Ben Hamilton and I immigrated to Sydney with my family in June 2011 from Christchurch, New Zealand. The earthquakes devastated my school and parish, Our Lady Star of the Sea. It was very scary time with lots of aftershocks for months. When we moved to Australia, it was good to feel safe from the aftershocks, especially at night. Lots of people helped us when we first came to Sydney, giving us somewhere to live while we looked for accommodation, work and a new school for me. My new school was Blessed Sacrament in Clifton Gardens. They welcomed me with open arms and I made new friends easily. At first, I was given a bit of a hard time about my Kiwi (New Zealand) accent and I found it*

*a challenge to get used to Australian terms for things like thongs (jandals) and swimmers (togs). My older brother has moved back to New Zealand and I miss him a lot. We talk on Skype most weekends. Now I am at Marist College North Shore in my first year of high school and I feel more settled into Australian culture.*

*I still miss my friends from Christchurch but through school I have made new friends who accept me for who I am.*

*I know that challenges will always come along in life but I feel very grateful that I am able to live in Australia and enjoy learning and growing up in a very supportive environment at school.*

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## **Reflection on migration**

When disaster strikes, supportive environments critical to children's well-being may break down. Families may remain in emergency camps for extended periods, and these dysfunctional environments can become the only home children know during their formative years.

The Hyogo Framework for action, adopted by 168 governments in 2005, calls for the enhancement of communities' and countries' resilience. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the role children have in helping themselves and their communities to be safe. In the Philippines, for example, school children made a video of the risks in their community and presented it to local authorities. This resulted in dialogue between adults and children, the planting of trees to reduce the risk of landslides, and the relocation of a school to facilities built to minimize vulnerability to flood damage.

*(The State of the World's Children 2012 - Children in an Urban World UNICEF page 47)*

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**Psalm 121: 1-2, 4-5, 6-9 I rejoiced when I heard them say: 'Let us go to God's house.'**

I rejoiced when I hear them say:  
'Let us go to God's house.'  
And now our feet are standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

It is there that the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord.  
For Israel's law it is,  
there to praise the Lord's name.  
There were set the thrones of judgement  
of the house of David.

For the peace of Jerusalem pray:  
'Peace be to your homes!  
May peace reign in your walls,  
in your palaces, peace!'

For the love of my brethren and friends  
I say: 'Peace upon you!'  
For the love of the house of the Lord,  
I will ask for your good.

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**Intention:**

We ask Jesus and Mary to make us more sensitive to welcome families in migration, especially those suffering from natural disasters.

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**Prayer:**

*Dear God, I pray that you care for the children affected by natural disasters, like earthquakes. Give them courage to face their fears and the strength to accept whatever change happen in their lives. Please keep them safe from harm, give them the friendships they need to recover and enjoy a life following your light and love. Amen.*

## December 2

### Monday of the First Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1915 – first foundation in Morocco.

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#### **Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 4:2-6; Matthew 8:5-11.

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**Edilaine Chagas** –Age: 14  
Estado de Santa Catarina, Brazil  
Caçador, Santa Catarina, Brazil

*When our family first moved to Martello, (a neighbourhood of Caçador in the state of Santa Catarina), there was a great deal of prejudice against my family. I live with my mother and my brother, both of whom have health problems. When I first arrived, I didn't have any friends. Nobody would talk to me, and life was not easy. My mother suffers from depression, and I am the one who takes care of her. Not knowing her situation, people began saying bad things about her.*

*Since my brother was the only one who received money from the government, we often had to do without the basic necessities. When we first arrived, what hurt me the most was the fact that I didn't have any friends. Our neighbours would not help us because they thought that we were always trying to take advantage of them. Today, all of that has changed. I now have new friends. We get along with our neighbours because they now realize that we do not have anything against them. In spite of everything, life is still not easy. What I miss most is not having many close friends and living alone.*

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#### **Reflection on migration**

While international law defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen”, no single international legal definition of a migrant – and therefore of a migrant child – exists. Nevertheless, many discrete types of child migration – family-based, unaccompanied, irregular, trafficked, and asylum-related – have been the focus of national, regional and international attention. Despite the differences, they all include situations where children might be at risk of being exposed to abuse, neglect, violence or exploitation.

The circumstances of migrant children who are unaccompanied by or are separated from their normal carers has been a particular concern. Nevertheless, children on the move who are accompanied by their normal carers may also have protection needs, particularly where their carers are irregular migrants or where the family are destitute, conflict-affected refugees who have not adapted to their new surroundings.

(Submission by *Save the Children* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion page 2)



**Rhuan Filipe Gontijo  
dos Santos Barbosa** – Age: 7  
Estado de São Paulo, Brazil  
Samambaia, DF, Brazil

*Rhuan Filipe Gontijo dos Santos Barbosa relates that he previously lived in São Paulo and that ever since he left São Paulo and moved to the Federal District of Samambaia he is lonely and misses his mother. Yet, he went on to say, he enjoys living with his uncle Jean and his aunt Celiana along with his cousins Igor and Geovanna. He states, however, that he is frustrated at times because he must do things according to when they are scheduled. When he lived with his parents in São Paulo, he didn't have to do things according to a set schedule.*

*He went on to say that most of the time he played out in the street because there was neither television nor any other forms of entertainment at home. He stated that he felt accepted by his neighbours and by other students at school. He also added that he was well treated by his uncle and by members of the faculty at school. He stated that he had come to live in Brasilia with his uncle because his father was in prison and that his mother had told him that he would stay with his uncle only for a short while until she could "...find a suitable place where they could be together".*

**Psalm 121: 1-2, 4-5, 6-9 I rejoiced when I heard them say: 'Let us go to God's house.'**

I rejoiced when I hear them say:  
'Let us go to God's house.'  
And now our feet are standing

within your gates, O Jerusalem.

It is there that the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the Lord.  
For Israel's law it is,  
there to praise the Lord's name.  
There were set the thrones of judgement  
of the house of David.

For the peace of Jerusalem pray:  
'Peace be to your homes!  
May peace reign in your walls,  
in your palaces, peace!'

For the love of my brethren and friends  
I say: 'Peace upon you'!  
For the love of the house of the Lord,  
I will ask for your good.

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**Intention:**

Let us pray for children, for those living away from their families, for those who have major responsibilities within their family, and especially for the people dealing with their care.

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**Prayer:**

*Thank you Lord for all that you have given me. Thank you for the responsibility that you have given me of taking care of my mother. I know deep down that I can always rely upon your help, both in good times and in bad. Lord, please watch over my mom and my dad as well as everyone in my family. Also, take care of my teachers and my loved ones. They are the ones who give me the courage to carry on day after day. Amen.*

*Dear Lord, I pray that my father will soon be let free and that he will follow the right path. I pray that one day I will live with my father and my mother in our own house. Also, I would like for us to have a car, a bike, a little park where I can play, a hideaway out in the country and an island where I could sometimes be alone. Amen.*

**December 3**  
**Tuesday of the First Week of Advent**  
**Saint Francis Xavier**  
**International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

**Marist Anniversary:** 1956 – Departure of the first Brothers for Bolivia

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**Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 11: 1-10; Luke 10: 21-24.

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**Juan Rasines Mazo**

*Age: 14 - Spain  
NSW, Australia*

*Being able to travel around the world is fantastic and exciting. Furthermore, it gives you greater understanding of other cultures and traditions, as well as making new friends. This seems great, and it is, but when this happens to you as it has to me, you find that you may be forced to leave possibly everything you have and lose all those you love as well those that are a part of your life.*

*When you first arrive in an unknown place with no friends, it feels a bit as if you have been left out of the world. But soon you start to make friends and get to know your new location, finding that it might be a great place to live. Through my journey from Spain, to living in Greece for five years, to arriving in Australia, my parents have always supported me which I am very grateful for.*

*I am very happy to be in Australia and I am making new friends and learning new things. Although at the beginning it was not that easy, as coming from Europe, the change meant that I was without going to school for almost half a year. This affected me, as I had nothing to do and was without any friends.*

*The Marist community and Marist College North Shore have warmly welcomed me into their family and helped me guide my way through these great two months of school in Australia.*

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## **Reflection on migration**

Most child migrants move with their families, accompanying parents or caregivers seeking employment or opportunity. Almost a tenth of China's child population, or 27.3 million children, took part in internal migration with their parents in 2008. A significant number of children and young people, however, move within countries on their own. A recent analysis of census and household data from 12 countries found that one in five migrant children aged 12-14 and half of those aged 15-17 had moved without a parent.

*(The State of the World's Children 2012 - Children in an Urban World UNICEF page 35)*

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### **Psalm 71: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 *In his days justice shall flourish, and peace till the moon fails***

O God, give your judgment to the king,  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice  
and your poor in right judgement.

In his days justice shall flourish  
and peace till the moon fails.  
He shall rule from sea to sea,  
from the Great River to earth's bounds.

For he shall save the poor when they cry  
and the needy who are helpless.  
He will have pity on the weak  
and save the lives of the poor.

May his name be blessed for ever  
and endure like the sun.  
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,  
all nations bless his name.

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### **Intention:**

We pray for the children who live in constant change, and particularly for those living away from their families.

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**Prayer:** *Almighty Father, Help and lead all those who have moved or have been thrown out of their homes. Support all those in danger and trouble and guide them to a better life and give spirit to those, like me, that have travelled from trouble. Through Jesus Christ, Amen.*

**December 4**  
**Wednesday of the First Week of Advent**  
**Saint John Damascene**

**Marist Anniversary:** 1889, opening of the first Marist school in Colombia.

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**Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 25: 6-10; Matthew 15: 29-37.

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**Lenderson Rosa Reis**

Age: 16

São Bento, Maranhã, Brazil

São Luís, Capital, MA, Brazil

*My name is Lenderson Rosa Reis, and I am 16 years old. I am Brazilian and was born in São Bento, in the interior part of the state of Maranhão. My parents moved to São Luís looking for better jobs, since my father is a carpenter and my mother works as a housemaid. So my father sold a motorcycle to buy tickets for the entire family.*

*We live in São Luís, State Capital. When I was four years old, we had to go back to our city, but things didn't go well. So my father decided to move here to São Luís for good. I was eight years old and I remember it very well. Here in São Luís we lived in different neighbourhoods before ending up in this house close to the Marist Retreat House of*

*Acogida Olho d'Água, that today is very important in my life. And to think that when I first went to the Marist house it was out of mere curiosity and my desire to learn African dances. And look what happened: now I have a scholarship at the Colegio Marista Araçagy, managed by the Retreat House that is the Marist Youth Ministry; I am going to attend the World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro and I belong to the Radio Tribos. Not to mention that I also have a sister and a brother, Vanessa and Leandro, who are in the Retreat House too.*

*Today my mother is unemployed, my father works as a carpenter and we might have to move back to the interior part of the state. If this were the case, it would be a pity, because I don't want to lose the opportunity given to me by the*

*Marist Retreat House of Olho d'Água, not to mention all the friends I have here. This is why I pray every day for this not to happen, but my father has the final say.*

*This is why in my prayers I thank God for the path covered by my family, especially that of my mother and father; and for the great help provided by the Marist Retreat House of Olho d'Água to our lives.*

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### **Reflection on migration**

Children and young people frequently follow established patterns of migration. In West Africa and South Asia, where rates of independent child migration are particularly high, most child migrants leave home between the ages of 13 and 17. Many of these children grow up in impoverished rural areas where it is common to travel to seek work in order to supplement family income, whether for part of each year, during lean periods or for longer durations. At least 4 million children are thought to migrate seasonally, whether by themselves or with their families, in India alone.

*(The State of the World's Children 2012 – Children in an Urban World UNICEF page 36)*

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### **Psalm 22: 1-6 *In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever***

The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.  
Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.  
Near restful waters he leads me,  
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me in right path;  
he is true to his name.  
If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.  
You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.  
My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing.  
Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me

all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever.

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**Intention:**

Let us pray today in a special way for all the children who live in constant migration within their own country.

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**Prayer:**

*Lord, My Father! Here I am once again to thank you for all that has happened in my life. First of all, my God, I thank you for the relationships I have with my family. I also thank you for my life and that of my mother who has had some health issues that have been overcome. Bless all the people I love and especially my friends. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## December 5

### Thursday of the First Week of Advent

### International Day of Volunteers

#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 26: 1-6; Matthew 7: 21, 24-27.

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**Monga Mukasa**

Age: 16

Democratic Republic of Congo  
Victoria, Australia

*My name is Monga Mukasa and I'm 16 years old. I attend Notre Dame College Shepparton which is located in Victoria, Australia. I am currently in Year 11. I was born in Baraka, Democratic Republic of Congo, also known as the DRC. I'm the fourth child in my family of six children. Papi, Juliette, Achi and my little twin sisters Fitina and Neema. I come from a war torn country where many lives were taken by the soldiers. I lost my mother in the war and because of the war, one of my little twin sisters Neema and my uncle Machinda were separated from us. We didn't really have a chance to say goodbye to our mother when she passed away. My Uncle and sister however, made it safe walking across the Ugandan border and soon settled in Kenya.*

*They escaped the war but at that time we didn't know if they were still alive or not. I was left with my father and my four siblings. We also escaped the war into the Tanzania border where we were put into a Refugee Camp with many other families who escaped the Congo war.*

*Life in the Refugee Camp was very tough for me and my family. Each family was placed in a small house which was made out of mud, wood and dry grass. The houses mostly had two small rooms, so my three sisters shared a room and the same bed and my father, brother and I shared the same room. The house we were living in was very small for my family as we had six people living under same roof. The camp was looked after by the United Nation which supplied us food, water, clothes and few facilities. There was not enough food for everyone in the refugee camp, most of the times we starved and hoped that soon God would bring something on our table. In the Camp we couldn't access clean water and we had to walk about 20kms or more to fetch water from the well.*

*Because of this, many refugees got very sick with diseases such as malaria, germs and many more. I attended Primary School in the Mkugwa Refugee Camp. We had a lack of education and there were not enough facilities for students in my school. Many young girls stayed home and did housework (this included my sisters) because they were afraid of getting raped by strangers or local boys. Despite the bad situation of the camp, I was a capable student in my primary school as I got good grades and came second in my exams, and I made my family proud.*

*I was born and raised in a musical family. Before my mother was killed, she and my father were leaders of the senior church choir of a Methodist church in Congo. In the camp, my family continued singing and worshiping God through music and this was the time I first discovered my talent. I attended Lutheran church where I was soon selected as a lead singer in the children choir. My family formed a small singing group with other families where we sang, danced and shared our stories together while we were in the Refugee Camp.*

*After many years of living a miserable life, my family was able to come to Australia. It was a long process to be where we are today and it wasn't an easy journey. First we had to wait for a country to accept us, we did an interview, health checks and we waited for a country's government approval. I remember the very first time I heard that my family were able to come to Australia. I was at school at that time and my older sister Juliet came in excitement and told me one of the best pieces of news of my life. To be honest, I didn't know where in the world Australia was, what the country looked like, how far it would take us to get there or where we were going. I was very excited about leaving all the mess behind and was ready to move on with life, but at the same time I was worried about coming to Australia because I didn't know what to expect of the people there.*

*Shepparton was the town that my family settled in. In early February 2006, I started Primary School at St. Brendan's here in Shepparton. I started school in grade four where I struggled with speaking, writing and understanding English. Knowing more than 6 languages, we had trouble communicating with people around us; it was a very difficult time because we couldn't understand each other. My English improved and was I the first person in my family to pick up the English language so quickly. My family continued singing. We formed a group called the Congolese Choir and I was the leader just at the age of 10. After new arrivals arrived in Shepparton, new members joined the choir and soon we became known as the 'Angels Voices Band'.*

*Life in Australia for my family was good and we continued praising God for everything he had done for us. There was only one thing which really made us miserable, it was about my little twin sister Neema and my uncle Machinda who we had not heard from since the day we were separated. We prayed and*

*hope that one day we would hear from them. Then one day my father received a letter from my uncle saying that he and my sister were alive and they were being looked after by a church pastor who happened to know my father from Congo. In my life I've had so many spiritual moments, but this one meant a lot to me because I knew that I didn't have to worry about my uncle and sister anymore. In 2007 the Government of Australia approved my sister's visa and she was allowed to come to Australia, I didn't sleep the day we went to pick up my sister Neema from the airport, we were all excited and we wouldn't wait to see Neema for the first time after 5 years. This was the happiest day for my family being reunited with our sister. It was great having my family together after those many years of separation. Music and singing is my ambition, I sing because it's a special gift from God and I want to share it with everyone. My music is about life experience, having courage, talking to God and the issues of the world we are facing. Whenever I sing, I feel free and I feel the joy inside my heart. At Notre Dame College I've been involved in many musical events and the best part of it, is making great friendships with other young musicians and getting to know each other well. In the previous years, I've done many performances across the country with my band the Angels Voices. Having a passion of music and believing in myself, I have been selected to represent Australia at the World Championships of Performing Art in Hollywood this year in July, together with many other talented people across Australia. My experiences as a young boy have made me the person who I am today. Sometimes I look back and wonder what life would be like if this didn't happen? Where would I be? Or what would I be doing? Overall, I mostly thank God, my father, friends and family for always being there and showing me the way of how to be a better person. In everything I do, I try and believe in myself because when you believe, you shall receive.*

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### **Reflection on migration**

The UN agencies responsible for the rights and welfare of children should be proactive in putting pressure on governments to do more to support children in migrant communities especially in these key areas:

1. Training of practitioners working with children to raise their level of knowledge and confidence about the impact of culture and religion on children upbringing.
2. Putting more resources in awareness raising programmes among migrant communities on child protection and safeguarding.
3. A coherent government policy and regulatory action in all countries to prevent harm to vulnerable children and families and to protect children branded as witches and at risk of harmful exorcism rites.

4. Providing appropriate support to families whose social and economic conditions put their children at risk of abuse.  
(Submission by *Africans Unite against Abuse* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion page 7)

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**Psalm 117: 1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27 *Blessed in the name of the Lord is he who comes***

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,  
for his love has no end.  
It is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to trust in men;  
it is better to take refuge in the Lord  
than to trust in princes.

Open to me the gates of holiness;  
I will enter and give thanks.  
This is the Lord's own gate  
where the just may enter.  
I will thank you for you have answered  
and you are my saviour.

O Lord, grant us salvation;  
O Lord, grant success.  
Blessed in the name of the Lord  
is he whom comes.  
We bless you from the house of the Lord;  
the Lord God is our light.

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**Intention:**

Let us pray for the families who live in countries at war, especially for the children who suffer under unstable circumstances they must endure.

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**Prayer:**

*Thank you Lord for all that you have given me; thank you especially for the love that I feel for those who accept me as I am. I know that I can always rely upon your help.*

**December 6**  
**Friday of the First Week of Advent**  
**Saint Nicholas, Bishop.**

**Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31.

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**Sedler Miguel**  
Age: 13 - Angola  
Johannesburg, South Africa

*My name is Sedler Miguel. I am 13 years old. I am from Angola. I stay with my cousin in Johannesburg in South Africa from the time I was born. I never went to school until last year when Andrew Ballister, the Godfather of my cousin, registered me into the Three2Six Project. I was then 12 years old and I was placed in grade 5.*

*Before I came to the Project, my cousin had tried hard to find school for me but they had all said no. I use to wake up in the morning and watch the other children go to school, how they laugh with their friends and look so smart in their uniforms and I would think to myself when will be my turn to even sit in the class, raise up my hand and discuss with the other learners on class matters, then I would feel like I am losing hope for my future.*

*When I met Andrew, he asked me many questions and the one that troubled me was, 'which school do you go to?' I told him my story then he looked so sad. He said, 'I will make a plan'. Two weeks later, he made a call and told my cousin that he had found a school for me.*

*I was so happy and excited and when he took me to school in my Three2Six uniform, I felt so smart and happy and I knew that, with the help of God, my future will be bright.*

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**Reflection on migration**

*Three2Six Project at Sacred Heart College (Part 1)*

We are a refugee children educational project which has been managed by Sacred Heart College in Observatory (Johannesburg, South Africa) since 2008.

The Project is a bridging programme for refugee children who have difficulties registering in South African Schools either because the families are unable to pay the school fees and other related expenses to get their children into schools or the parents do not have all the necessary documents. Most of the refugee children do not speak English when they arrive in South Africa which makes it difficult for them to be able to follow lessons in a normal school. Also the refugee children arrive at odd times when the school registration is no longer possible.

The project operates in the afternoons from Monday to Friday from 3 to 6 pm when the main school classes are over. We have a group of 140 children from 6 years to 13 years old.

We help the children get used to English as the main language of communication of the schools here in South Africa. At the stage of moving to a normal school, English is no longer a barrier for them, as they are able to understand, speak, write or read English. The children who are far behind are put into a remedial class where they do their English sessions until they get to the right level of their group. Three2Six Project has also a children's Library that is run once a week. The children borrow books and bring them back after one week. The books are mostly donated.

The children follow also a Maths programme that is scheduled on South African Schools' standards. This allows them to integrate quickly in appropriate grades once they move out of the project. This year, 4 children have won a scholarship and have been placed in 2 of the top public schools in Johannesburg.

(Esther Olive N Munonoka, the Three2Six Project Coordinator. See the continuation of this story on December 10).

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**Psalm 26: 1, 4, 13-14 *The Lord is my light and my help***

The Lord is my light and my help;  
whom should I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life;  
before whom should I shrink?

One thing I ask of the Lord;  
for this I long,  
to live in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to savour the sweetness of the Lord  
to behold his temple.

I am sure I shall see the Lord's goodness  
in the land of the living.  
Hope in him, hold firm and take heart.  
Hope in the Lord!

---

**Intention:**

We pray today in a special way for the volunteers who spontaneously give themselves to others.

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**Prayer:**

*Holy Spirit, I pray for me and my family. Thank you for our food every day; thank you for the wellbeing; thank you for the air we breathe. Amen.*

# December 7

## Saturday of the First Week of Advent

### Saint Ambrose

#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35 -10:1, 6-8.

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**Layra Lizzeth Irías**  
Age: 10 - Nicaragua  
Los Chiles, Costa Rica

*Hello friends!*

*My name is Layra Lizzeth Irías and I am sending a greeting of Pure Life to all the children of the world. I am 10 years old and I was born in Nicaragua. I live in los Chiles de Costa Rica. Do you want to know why I am here? It is a long story but I will make it short. I came with my Mom and my dad stayed in Nicaragua, I don't know why. I came when I was 5 years old. Most of my family is in Nicaragua and I really want to see them, although I want to live in Costa Rica because they treat my very well; I would also like to go back to Nicaragua to see my uncle and aunts and cousins. Well, I wish you the best wherever you are.*

---

#### Reflection on migration

An important driver to understand the phenomenon of migration is the different levels of development between Brazilian regions that has existed throughout the country's history. The search for a better future is one of the main drivers for a population to leave its origins, its home land, in search of such a *future*. This motivation seen in families is principally related to the search of a better life for their children.

Currently, Brazil's economic development has contributed towards this internal migration. This is the case of hydroelectric power plants in Northern Brazil, especially in the city of Porto Velho, Rondônia State and in the city of Altamira, Pará State. These works displace approximately 20,000 workers during construction to regions of low-density population which, for this reason, are unprepared to receive such a contingent of people. Among these migrants

are children who, accompanied by their families, experience the same situations as of the adults in search of another reality.

(Submission by *UMBRASIL* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion)



**Eliaquim Guilherme Alves Rodrigues**

Age: 11

Aparecida de Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil

Silvânia, Goiás, Brasil

*While going to school at Aparecida de Goiânia, I had a difficult time, and the only one who helped me was the principal. When I moved to Silvânia, the first school that I attended was Manoel Caetano do Nascimento. I had a lot of difficulty reading. Those who helped me were Izaque, João-Victor, Diego and Bruno. Later, I went to school at “Aprendizado”. At first, I was upset because other students thought that I didn’t know anything. A month later, my teacher asked another teacher for help, telling her that I wasn’t doing anything in her class. That same day, the other teacher came to my class and asked me why I wasn’t co-operating. I told her that I didn’t like to be called Eliaquim and that I preferred to be called Guilherme.*

*She later told me that my name was beautiful and unique. From that moment on, I enjoyed being called Eliaquim. Like my other school, classes here have been good.*

---

**Psalm 146: 1-6 *Happy are all who hope in the Lord.***

Praise the Lord for he is good;  
sing to our God for he is loving;  
to him our praise is due.  
The Lord builds up Jerusalem  
and brings back Israel’s exiles.

He heals the broken – hearted,  
he binds up all their wounds.  
He fixes the number of the stars;

he calls each one by its name.

Our Lord is great and almighty;  
his wisdom can never be measured.  
The Lord raises the lowly;  
he humbles the wicked to the dust.

---

**Intention:**

We pray for the children whose parents live apart.

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**Prayer:**

*Dear Guardian Angel, I ask you to help all students here to have a love for learning. Thank you for everything that has happened to me in my life. Help those who have lost their homes as well as the homeless who have no place to go to. I ask you to help and support all of these people. Amen.*

## December 8

### Second Sunday of Advent

**Marist Anniversaries:** 1942, Consecration of the Institute to the Immaculate Heart of Mary; 2003, Foundation of the District of Melanesia; 2012, Foundation of the Province of Australia.

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#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 11:1-10. He judges the poor with justice;

Romans 15:4-9. Christ, the hope of all people;

Matthew 3:1-12. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.

---



**Joao Victor Viegas Arguelho**

Age: 14

Mato Grosso, Brazil

Curitiba, Paran, Brazil

*I was born in Campo Grande which is the capital of Mato Grosso do Sul. When I was one year old, we moved to Curitiba which is the capital of Paraná. I don't remember much about those days because I was so little. We later moved to Maracaju which is also in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. For the past four years, I have been living in Dourados which is located in the same state. In Dourados alone, we have moved twice so far. The reason why we have moved so often is because of my father's occupation. I have gotten used to moving from place to place and living in different houses.*

*I miss my great grandfather who used to live with me in Maracaju. I met my first close school friends here in Dourados. When I first arrived here in Dourados, people at school made fun of me because of the way I dressed. In Maracaju we did not have special clothes for school. That's why others made fun of me, and the reasons why I had a few fights at the beginning. Now I would rather live here in Dourados than in Maracaju. When I was there, the streets were not yet paved, and people easily fell into drugs. Here in Dourados, I find that there are more opportunities for advancement and the quality of life is much better.*

---

## **Reflection on migration**

Within the scope of a continental country like Brazil, such phenomenon has taken place in states, municipalities and cities within different territories. The reasons pointed out depict such diversity, as well as family or community violence, the search of better working or living conditions, models of economic development that take away populations from their place of origin to open the way for large developments, etc.

It is important to consider thoroughly the impacts of migration on this part of the population and what has been done in favour of the children that experience this process. It is important to know how their rights are being assured and how the Government has set public policies and planned such process, aiming to serve the population.

(Submission by *UMBRASIL* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion)

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### ***Psalm 71: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17 In his days justice shall flourish, and peace till the moon fails***

O God, give your judgement to the king,  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice  
and your poor in right judgement.

In his days justice shall flourish  
and peace till the moon fails.  
He shall rule from sea to sea,  
from the Great River to earth's bounds.

For he shall save the poor when they cry  
and the needy who are helpless.  
He will have pity on the weak  
and save the lives of the poor.

May his name be blessed for ever  
and endure like the sun.  
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,  
all nations bless his name.

---

### **Intention:**

We pray for the families who live in constant change, and especially for the children who suffer the impact.

---

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for helping me to adapt to changes in my life. Thank you for my willingness to confront mediocrity and injustice. Thank you especially for the love that I feel for those who accept me as I am. Thank you for the love that I have for my parents even when there are issues with them that I do not completely understand. Thank you for the strength that you have given me not to follow the crowd and to give into drugs. Thank you for not allowing me to surrender my dignity as a Christian. I have but one thing to ask of you: give me the spirit of understanding so that I may experience your presence and be at ease with those around me, especially with those who are of my own age. I give you all that I am and have. I know that it isn't much, but it's my way of letting you know that I enjoy the life that you have given me and that I want to live my life as one worthy of being one of your children. Amen.*

# December 9

## Monday of the Second Week of Advent

### The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**Marist Anniversary:** 1879, Death of Brother Louis Marie, second Superior General of the Institute.

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#### **Today's Readings:**

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38.

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*Hello friends!*

*My name is Lidieth Gonzalez Corea and I am 10 years old. I was born in San Carlos of Nicaragua.*

*I came to Los Chiles de Costa Rica. I came with my mom because she was looking for a job; my dad stayed in Nicaragua.*

*I am happy in Costa Rica, but I also think of my country. When I graduate from 6<sup>th</sup> grade I intend to go back to Nicaragua.*

*On one occasion a Costa Rican boy to bother me, told me I was a "nica" as to make fun of me and I answered that the "nicas" are not dogs, that they are the same as you and that we all have the same Rights. And he got quiet.*

*Goodbye friends, have a happy year.*



**Lidieth González Corea**

Age: 10

Nicaragua

Los Chiles, Costa Rica

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#### **Reflection on migration**

In a world that calls itself "globalized" and increasingly connected by the several means of transport, one phenomenon has become more frequent: the migration of families, both within a country or to other countries, or even to other continents. To search for a better life and, in certain cases, to preserve their own survival, whole families leave their origins, their culture and their own history to adventure to distant places, where they experience all sorts of endurances, as well as prejudice, discrimination and the difficulties of adaptation.

If such a scenario is distressing for adults, for children the negative consequences arising from the obligation of leaving their origins to live in other neighbourhoods, cities or countries that are strange to them, and sometimes

even hostile, can become overwhelming, and may even lead to emotional troubles and traumas which are difficult to overcome.

(Submission by UMBRASIL for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion)



***Millena de Jesus Olivira***

*Age: 14*

*Estado da Bahia, Brazil*

*Vila Velha, ES, Brazil*

*When my family moved here the conditions were bad, since the neighbourhood had started from the invasions. The houses were made of wood and canvas; there was no sewerage system, water or electricity. It was hard for my family to get accustomed to the situation since we came from the state of Bahia where we had all the necessary infrastructures. We suffered a lot having to collect water, use candles for light, apart from getting accustomed to very different habits.*

*Today, the Terra Vermelha neighbourhood still has many problems but progress is being made in infrastructures and we are more accustomed to the way of life of the people of the region. We are involved in the struggle for improvements, especially the ones aimed at young people.*

*From this point of view, we want to build common areas so young people can work on practices to improve the future of youngsters, that is, in building dreams, set goals that can help transform the reality of the community where we live.*

***Psalm 97: 1-4 Sing a new song to the Lord for he has worked wonders.***

Sing a new song to the Lord  
for he has worked wonders.

His right hand and his holy arm  
have brought salvation.

The Lord has made known his salvation;  
has shown his justice to the nations.

He has remembered his truth and love

for the house of the Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.  
Shout to the Lord, all the earth,  
ring out your joy.

---

**Intention:**

We pray that the children living in constant change may enjoy family harmony.

---

**Prayer:**

*Lord Jesus, I thank you for letting me come here to Costa Rica to know more and to study; I also thank you for giving me the wisdom and reasoning to be able to study and defend myself from those who offend me. Thank you for keeping my family well. Thank you Jesus.*

*Lord! Bless my life, my family and the young people of my neighbourhood, so that we can turn it into a better place to live. Amen.*

**December 10**  
**Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent**  
**International Day of Human Rights (UNO)**

**Marist Anniversary:** 1984, First Marist Foundation in Kenya.

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**Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18: 12-14.

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**Nzanga Kapenda**

Age: 13

Democratic Republic of Congo

Johannesburg, South Africa

*My name is Nzanga Kapenda. I am 13 years old. I come from the Democratic Republic of Congo.*

*I stay with my mom in Johannesburg in the Republic of South Africa since 2007. I have 3 brothers and 2 sisters but we do not all stay together because my mom does not have money to look after all of us.*

*We have all studied in the Three2Six Project because my mom did not have money to pay fees for us in a public school. After we left the project, I and one of my sister were the only ones who could carry on with school.*

*Our other siblings are still waiting to have a chance to go to school but our small brother is still in the Project.*

*The Project is also trying to sort the problem for my siblings to go back to school.*

*Three2Six Project has helped me a lot to know English and Maths and when my mom once got arrested by the police, the Project looked after us and followed on her case until she got released. I thank God for the help he provided for us through them.*

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*I was born in Curitiba. Last year my parents decided to move to Guaraqueçaba which is located on the easternmost part of the state and live on a nearby island. I really miss my brothers who remained behind in Curitiba. I also miss my friends who would come over to my house to play with me. Here in Curaqueçaba, I only have two friends. I had no problem getting settled here, but I'm afraid that someday the ocean will reach right up to my house. I prefer swimming in a pool rather than in the ocean. One day, one of my friends didn't want to come to play with me, and I don't know why. I like it here, but I would really prefer going back to Curitiba.*



**Maria Eduarda Schuster**  
Age: 8 - Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil  
Guaraqueçaba, Paraná, Brazil

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*Three2Six Project at Sacred Heart College. (Part 2)*

The project also includes a Life Skills programme which is enriched with a once a week Sports and a once a week iPad sessions. We also have a Religious Education session once a month. Since 2012 the National Children Theatre has started to include our children in the Saturday workshops.

We organise a holiday programme every August holidays to give the children a chance to experience some other learning areas and extra curricula activities. The holiday programme scheme started in 2010 and the children produced a comic book titled 'Refugee Stories – the spirit of the three 2 six school'. In 2011, they made an animation story called 'Precious' in which they relate the story of their journey to South Africa. Last year, they did art and our theme was Science, Peace and Art. We are planning to work on the cultural theme this coming August (2013).

Three2Six Project employs 7 teachers and 1 coordinator who are assisted by a volunteer worker. All of the Three2Six staff members are refugees. They are mentored in the South African curriculum by the host school and they upgrade their qualifications with UNISA. The volunteer comes for a one year period and is usually replaced once she/he is over her/his period. We get also helped by the Sacred Heart students who offer to do their Community Service work with us.

We run 6 classes from grade 1 to 6 and the seventh one is a remedial class. The grade R children are referred to Observatory Girls Primary School which has been running a Three2Six grade R to 1 branch from 2010. The programme does not intend to keep the children throughout the grades. Once the child is ready

to join the mainstream we ask the parents to register their child in the mainstream. We assist the children to get the first pack of uniform and stationery in order to have a start at their new school. Some children do not manage to leave the project before they complete grade 6.

Apart from the Educational scheme, the Three2Six Project provides uniform, stationery and lunch to the children. Considering that most of these children come from destitute families who have just arrived in South Africa from worn torn countries, their families struggle to provide all the material support needed by their children to commence school. We only ask the parents to buy school shoes and a school bag which some families still struggle to afford. Since 2012, 'Toms Shoes' has started to provide shoes to our children and the offer has been regular so far. All the children get their shoes in their correct size and whenever they are worn out, the shoes get replaced. Sacred Heart parents also assist the Three2Six families with parcels of food that are given to the children to take home once or twice a week.

(Esther Olive N Munonoka, Three2Six Project Coordinator)

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**Psalm 96: 1-3, 10-13 *Here is our God coming with power***

O sing a new song to the Lord,  
sing to the Lord all the earth.  
O sing to the Lord, bless his name.  
Proclaim his help day by day.

Tell among the nations his glory  
and his wonders among all the peoples.  
Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king.'  
He will judge the peoples in fairness.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad,  
let the sea and all within it thunder praise,  
let the land and all it bears rejoice,  
all the trees of the wood shout for joy  
at the presence of the Lord for he comes,  
he comes to rule the earth.

With justice he will rule the world,  
he will judge the peoples with his truth.

---

**Intention:**

We pray in a special way for the children who live alone, without friends to play and rejoice.

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**Prayer:**

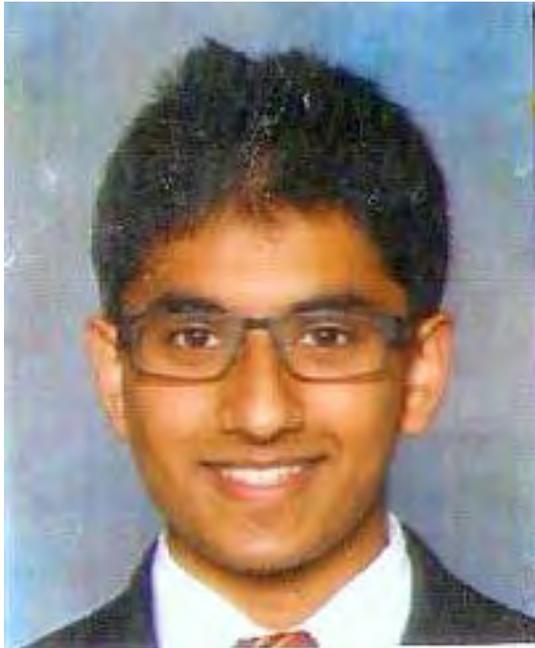
*I pray for everyone's happiness. I pray that my father may begin thinking of going back to Curitiba so that I can play with my friends that I left behind. I also pray that I will be with my classmates again because I've just been put back a year in school.*

**December 11**  
**Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent**  
**Saint Damasus I**

**Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 40: 25-31; Matthew 11: 28-30.

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**Neil Bookseller**

Age: 16

Mumbai, India

NSW, Australia

*Hi, my name is Neil! I am 16 years old and am a senior at Marist College Eastwood in Sydney. I moved to Australia as an immigrant five years ago due to my dad's work transfer. We are originally from Mumbai, India where I lived along with my grandparents and that is still where most of my family and friends are currently living. The shift from India to Australia was the biggest step in my life thus far. As a naive eleven year old child who had spent most of his life in a developing country, I had not really experienced a lot of struggle or change in life and lacked exposure in terms of growing as a person. I moved to Sydney in July 2008 and the moment my parents and I got out of the airport, we were welcomed by the intensely cold weather.*

*After living for a couple of days in a hotel, we soon rented a lovely house and made it our home! My parents quickly enrolled me in a nearby college whose principal placed me in Year 7 and from there began my incredible six year journey in high school. As the days passed, I was surprised to find the vast differences between the Indian and Australian societies. Small things such as refuelling one's car at a petrol station could be done by paying a serviceman in Mumbai, but here, you had to do it all by yourself. As education in India starts early, I was quite young in age compared to the majority of my year group. I was astounded by how mature kids in Year 7 could be and found myself learning a lot of things I didn't know as an eleven year old. There was definitely an early struggle in terms of coping with discrimination, racism and bullying as I was a completely different character in terms of age, religion, skin colour, accent and even basic lifestyle being the only vegetarian in my school. I felt like a fish out of water several times throughout the initial six months of my life in*

*Australia and severely missed my family and friends back home. It often felt like I had taken enough and I just wanted to go back, but through constant support of my parents, year coordinator (Mr. McNamara), new friends and teachers, I was able to power through and achieve outstanding results in academics and was presented by a prestigious award in the school. Things soon started to turn around for my family and me, as we fit in the Australian way of life. Through continuing assistance from friends, teachers and family, I was able to have a successful transition from a naive kid to a mature grown teenager which led me to be the dux of the year for 4 years in a row and also being elected as the Academic Leader of the College by my peers. As new Sydneysiders, my parents have now purchased a wonderful house and all 3 of us have received our permanent residency. Hoping to get my citizenship soon and completing my HSC this year, I hope and thank God for the wonderful opportunity he has offered me and pray for a bright future as I wish to spend my life in Australia.*

---

### **Reflection on migration**

The problems faced by new migrant families include: immigration status; lack of social support system enjoyed back home (child care, family mediation); lack of support for children with severe behaviour problems or with disabilities; people suffering post-traumatic stress disorder; unemployment and underemployment; former child soldiers needing special support; exclusion from school & underperformance; social exclusion creating a sense of powerlessness; child trafficking and exploitation; experience of harassment, racial discrimination leading to withdrawal from seeking appropriate services and to low self esteem; linguistic difficulties leading to lack of understanding of their needs especially children.

(Submission by *Africans Unite against Abuse* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion page 4).

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### **Psalm 102: 1-4, 8, 10 My soul, give thanks to the Lord.**

My soul, give thanks to the Lord  
all my being, bless his holy name.  
My soul, give thanks to the Lord  
and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt,  
who heals every one of your ills,  
who redeems your life from the grave,  
who crowns you with love and compassion.  
The Lord is compassion and love,

slow to anger and rich in mercy.  
He does not treat us according to our sins  
nor repay us according to our faults.

---

**Intention:**

We pray for the children of the world, especially for those who suffer the impact of changing circumstances.

---

**Prayer:**

*I hope and thank God for the wonderful opportunity he has offered me and pray for a bright future as I wish to spend my life in Australia.*

## December 12

### Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

### Our Lady of Guadalupe

#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15.

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#### **Emily Ferreira Macedo de Oliveira**

*I used to live in Marieta in the northern section of Caçador. Now, however, I live in the residential neighbourhood of Vista Bela which is in the same city. The reason why we moved is that previously we paid rent. My mother recently applied for government housing, and now, we have our own home. Most people who live here have done the same. The main problem is that this area lacks an infrastructure. There are no schools, we do not yet have a hospital, and there are no nearby shopping centres where we can go. The only solution is to take a bus. Before I came here, my school was only five minutes away; now, I have to take a*



Age: 14

Marieta, Caçador, Sta Catarina  
Bela Vista, Caçador, Sta Catarina  
Brazil

*bus to school. As far as the hospital is concerned, we have to take a bus to Vivi Xavier which is the same hospital that we went to before we came here. The shopping centre is another problem. Until recently, we didn't have one. In order to buy anything, we would have to go as far as Saul Elkind Avenue which is at quite a distance from here. Now have two shopping centres. I feel that we have overcome most of the problems that we faced. People here help one another. However, I don't think that we have overcome all of the difficulties because our neighbourhood is so spread out. There are many hands willing to help, but there are few resources available. In Marieta where I lived before moving here, people knew one another and this made everything easier to deal with. When one moves to another place, people are different and so are the surroundings. This brings about a kind of culture shock. When you return to your old neighbourhood, people recognize you and approach you knowing who you are. Now that I am living among strangers, people are suspicious of me and test me out. One must face up to these*

*challenges. Things were no different while I was attending school. However, when we are out of school and on vacation, I am able to speak to others, and I even made some friends. I am not an outgoing person by nature and this makes lasting friendships difficult.*

*Is there any prejudice here? The answer is yes. I have heard people say: "People who live in Vista Bela are slum dwellers who are never satisfied." I have heard other such slurs.*

---

### **Reflection on migration**

Governments should support research on the realities of children in migration, in order to understand the dimension of the migration phenomenon and to guarantee effective public policies are established to protect these children's rights.

They should implement educational policies to raise awareness of this issue and consequently reduce prejudice against migrating children.

Governments should define a public policy to guarantee the rights of migrating populations, recognizing internal and external human mobility, with special attention to the rights of migrating children who need to be assured of their right to remain with their family of origin, and of being promptly included in the educational system and in other public facilities dedicated to identifying and promptly treating the traumas that arise from migration.

There should be the allocation of public (budget) funds, in order to guide, support and assist migrating families as a whole, prioritizing the specialized care of children in this situation.

(Submission by *UMBRASIL* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion)

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***Psalm 144: 1, 9-13 The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love.***

I will give you glory, O God my king,  
I will bless your name for ever.  
How good is the Lord to all,  
compassionate to all his creatures.

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,  
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.  
They shall speak of the glory of your reign  
and declare your might, O God,  
to make known to men your mighty deeds  
and the glorious splendour of your reign.

Yours is an everlasting kingdom;  
your rule lasts from age to age.

---

**Intention:**

With the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us pray for all the children living in a state of neglect. We also pray in a special way for indigenous people.

---

**Prayer:**

*Dear Lord, shed your light on our new political leader. Help him to find a way to improve our neighbourhood and our infrastructure. Lord, as you know, not everyone has the means of getting out and going into the city whenever they like. Everything depends on bus transportation. Furthermore, bus tickets are getting to be more and more expensive. Help us to find an easier way of getting around. Also Lord, people need more protection. Our population is ever increasing and so is our neighbourhood. Help us to find more resources to protect the children. Deliver us from evil. It has become all too easy to fall into the drug culture that is all around. Amen.*

**December 13**  
**Friday of the Second Week of Advent**  
**Saint Lucy**

**Today's Readings:**

Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19.

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**Anastasiya Russkikh**  
Age: 15 - Russia  
Girona, Catalunha, Spain

*Hello! My name is Anastasiya, I am from Russia and I am 15 years old. I am in my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of ESO studies in the Marist school in Girona. I want to give you a brief summary of my story.*

*I liked Russia very much because all my family and friends are there. We did fun things and I was very happy.*

*I came to Catalonia 2 years and 10 months ago, only on vacation, and I decided to stay and live here. When the day came to go to school I was very nervous because I did not know any other language aside from my mother tongue. The first year was very difficult. People communicated with me through gestures. Now I am doing very well, I have learned two languages: Catalan and Castilian Spanish, I have friends and I am very happy. I like living in Catalonia very much but I miss my family.*

---

*My name is Qianwen Huang and I am 16 years old. I was born in China and I have been living in Chile for approximately 12 years. Since I came to this country when I was small, the change was not that categorical, or maybe I don't remember. I think it was more difficult for my parents to adjust to a new language, to the new habits, to the new culture in general. But all in all, it has been a rewarding experience. We have never had major problems with the Chileans, since as compared to the people of our country, they are much warmer, more*



**Qianwen Huang**, Age: 16, China  
Rancagua, Chile

welcoming and close; therefore we were always very well-accepted everywhere. Although, naturally, there will always be exceptions where we are sometimes discriminated or looked at on the street. But these are minor things with no major significance.

Our challenge as migrants is mainly to establish ourselves as people; to have more opportunities, something that was quite difficult in our country since there are too many people and a lot of competition. To this date, we have lived very well and satisfied many of our expectations. The school was a fundamental support in this.

So we could say that we are lucky migrants because we could achieve what we had set out for and we are happy living in this beautiful country.

---

### **Reflection on migration**

On the European scene, the migratory phenomenon known as “Unaccompanied Minors” appeared between 1980 and 1990. Although minor migrations had been occurring for centuries in the history of Europe and the world, it was not until 1989, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified (1989) that the social construction of “Childhood” was developed and their rights universalized. The assumption of this new category of childhood involved a change in the approach and implemented a protectionist perspective, granting to all minors the need to be protected and placed under the care of the institutions responsible for protecting minors.

(Submission by the *Faculty School of Alcala de Henares, Spain*, for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion).

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### **Psalm 1: 1-4, 6 *Anyone who follows you, O Lord, will have the light of life.***

Happy indeed is the man  
who follows not the counsel of the wicked;  
nor lingers in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the company of scorners,  
but whose delight is the law of the Lord  
and who ponders his law day and night.

He is like a tree that is planted  
beside the flowing waters,  
that yields its fruit in due season  
and whose leaves shall never fade;  
and all that he does shall prosper.

Not so are the wicked, not so!  
For they are like winnowed chaff  
shall be driven away by the wind,  
for the Lord guards the way of the just  
but the way of the wicked leads to doom.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the children living in the midst of cultural change, and for their families.

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**Prayer:**

*Gracious God, thank you for everything you have given me. I will forever be indebted to you and that is why I leave my life in your hands. I only ask you to take care of my loved ones, to preserve the fortune of good health and good living in my family. Thy will be done in me and in my environment. Amen.*

# December 14

## Saturday of the Second Week of Advent

### Saint John of the Cross

#### Today's Readings:

Sirach 48: 1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17: 10-13.

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*My life began and continues to go well, but I am lonely. I was born in Brasilia and I liked it there very much. I went to Don Bosco Elementary School for a few years and I had lots and lots of friends who always greeted me warmly. My teacher's name was Virtelana. She was kind and understanding. The reason why we moved to Rio de Janeiro from Brasilia is because rents there were very high.*

*I now live in the Carioca City of Rio de Janeiro which is a large and beautiful city. It has beautiful beaches and the most delicious acai that I have ever tasted. I attend Padre Lancisio Elementary School which like my previous school has a school cafeteria.*

*It was difficult at the beginning, because since I arrived five months ago, the only boys who greeted me were Daniel-Lucas, Danielo-Porto, and João –Victor. As compared to my previous school, classes here are different, but better. They are fast moving and less boring. Of all my classes, I like math the best.*

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**Matheus Xavier Lelles**

Age: 10 - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Silvânia, Goiás, Brazil

#### Reflection on migration

Preparing and implementing such public policy most certainly entails a basic assumption, which is to gather information on the number of existing cases, including from a “historical” viewpoint. Such information must also indicate the places of origin of the migrants and, especially for internal migrations (within the same country); enable the conduction of preventive actions, within the scope of avoiding forced displacements as mentioned above. It also demands the allocation of public (budget) funds, in order to guide, support and assist migrating families as a whole, in order to have migrating children receive the specialized (and priority) care mentioned above and to which they are entitled to.

In an international outlook, it demands the execution of cooperation agreements between countries, especially neighbouring ones and/or those where migrations are more frequent, in order to regulate the situation of migrants and avoid damages, especially for children of migrating families.

It demands, therefore, the full effectiveness of the provisions of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which fully apply to migrating children, who cannot in any way suffer any kind of prejudice or discrimination because of their situation.

(Submission by *UMBRASIL* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion)

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**Psalm 79: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19 *Lord, of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.***

O shepherd of Israel, hear us,  
shine forth from your cherubim throne.

O Lord, rouse up your might,  
O lord, come to our help.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore,  
look down from heaven and see.

Visit this vine and protect it,  
the vine your right hand has planted.

May your hand be on the man you have chosen,  
the man you have given your strength.

And we shall never forsake you again;  
give us life that we may call upon your name.

---

**Intention:**

We pray that social policies may favour the members of society who are most in need.

---

**Prayer:**

*Dear Jesus, bless each step that I take along the way. Bless all teachers and students in this Marist school, and bless me, as well, for I am one of your followers. May my family always remain close to you. Thank you for your many blessings: for the food that I eat, for the time that you have given me and for the example that you have given me by the way you lived your life. May we always be your true children. Amen.*

## December 15

### Third Sunday of Advent

### Gaudete Sunday

**Marist Anniversary:** 1949, departure of the first Brothers for Nigeria

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#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10. God himself will come and save us;

James 5:7-10. You also must be patient; do not lose heart, the Lord's coming will be soon;

Matthew 11:2-11. 'Are you the one who is to come, or must we wait for someone else?'

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**Mwamba Japhet**  
Age: 15 - Congo  
Montreal, Canada

*My name is Mwamba Japhet. I am from the Congo. I have been in Canada for a year and a half and I have made some new friends. I am happy to be here with my family, but I miss playing the sports that I used to play in my country, such as soccer. On the other hand, thanks to our spiritual guide, we undertake various projects that help us to blend in with others in a society that is far different than our own. Trying to make the world a better place by helping others in our society, especially the poor, the elderly and the less fortunate helps us to adapt to our new community. I personally enjoy working with older people. They are often forgotten by others. When young people like myself help others, we also helping ourselves.*

---

#### Reflection on migration

The identification and implementation of a long-term solution for each child involved in migration - being in the country of destination, the country of origin or in a third country- are complex activities. Information from multiple sources and in different geographical locations is required, including through transnational contacts between actors in different countries.

Such transnational information gathering is often essential to facilitate, for example, tracing family members and restoring family or community links where this is in the best interests of the child; assessing the circumstances of the family; gathering other important information on the background of the

child and the circumstances in the area of origin; sharing the child's views and attitudes to the home environment; assessing the opportunities and resources available in the country of origin or third countries (where family members might be residing) to establish whether the protection and care of the child would be adequately ensured.

The phase of implementation of the durable solutions identified for the child also requires specific measures to ensure that the child has access to adequate care, education and training, protection and support and to monitor progress in his or her integration. Transnational coordination and communication are often necessary to ensure that such measures are implemented.

Experience from programmatic interventions shows that failures in such transnational coordination between key actors - both at the identification phase and during the implementation of long-term solutions - can result in serious violations of children's rights.

(Submission by *Save the Children* for the 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion pages 8-9)

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**Psalm 145: 6-10 *Come, Lord, and save us.***

It is the Lord who keeps faith for ever,  
who is just to those who are oppressed.  
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,  
the Lord, who sets prisoners free.

It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,  
who raises up those who are bowed down,  
the Lord, who protects the stranger  
and upholds the widow and orphan.

It is the Lord who loves the just  
but thwarts the path of the wicked.  
The Lord will reign for ever,  
Zion's God, from age to age.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the people who work in institutions which welcome the migrants.

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**Prayer:**

*I pray God to take care of my entire family, especially those who are far from me, and I thank him for all those who surround me and the family that I have.  
Amen.*

## December 16

### Monday of the Third Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1845, Bishop Epalle dies on the island of San Cristobal in Oceania.

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#### **Today's Readings:**

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17; Matthew 21:23-27.

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*The reason why I came to live here in the city of Silvânia is because life back in Maranhão was almost impossible. What made things even worse was the fact that my father was slashed on the wrist and could no longer use his right hand. My father's mother did not like my mother, and did everything that she could to have my mother and father separate. After some time, my mother came to visit my aunt who had been living here in Silvânia for the past three years. My brother, Daniel, was already here when she came. After a couple of months, she met a man, and they began to go out together.*



**Bruno Gabriel Ribeiro Rodrigues**

Age: 11 - Maranhã, Brazil  
Silvania, GO, Brazil

*Eventually, however, she had to leave. A few months later, my mother returned and brought my sister and me with her. My mother enrolled us at school at "Apprendizado Marista". At first, we both had a hard time learning to read and to write. Thanks to tutoring and placing us in appropriate classrooms, we made progress. I have been here for three years. I finally was allowed to enter into the fifth grade after repeating in the fourth grade. If I do well by the end of the year, I will move into the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.*

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#### **Reflection on migration**

The voices of the children consulted and reflected in this summary clearly say that listening and responding to what children have to say about why they move from their homes, their experiences as they journey across countries, borders and seas and what they hope to find and build at their destination, is vital if we are to guarantee that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

- Children’s views, experiences and recommendations must be heard to respond to their needs and support them before, during and after travel.
- The protection of children from risky migration starts before they leave. Support for parents, access to education and training and protection from harm and violence within the family and communities are essential to prevent unsafe migration.
- Families, children and communities need information to take decisions about migrating or not. Information campaigns should not be just about the risks of migration but include practical information about the travel, the destination and the labour market so that they can better protect themselves from exploitation and access support if and where they need them.

(Recommendations made by *Save the Children* to 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion, page 9 of *Voices of Children on the Move*)



***Aldana Castelnovo***

*Age: 14 - Argentina  
Montreal, Canada*

*Hello! My name is Aldana, and I come from Argentina. My family and I moved to Canada in 2003. Coming here has been a very positive experience for me. It has opened my eyes to a whole new culture, and I have learned two new languages: French and English. I am happy to share what I have gone through with others in the Marist world. I have made many new friends from around the world and most especially from the Latin-American church community in Montreal.*

*I am happy to have been invited to share what I have gone through with others throughout the Marist world.*

**Psalm 24: 4-6, 7-9 *Lord, make me know your ways***

Lord make me know your ways.  
 Lord, teach me your paths.  
 Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:  
 for you are God my saviour.

In you I hope all day long  
 because of your goodness, O Lord.

Remember your mercy, Lord,  
and the love you have shown from of old.  
Do not remember the sins of my youth.  
In your love remember me.

The Lord is good and upright.  
He shows the path to those who stray.  
He guides the humble in the right path,  
he teaches his way to the poor.

---

**Intention:**

We pray for a deeper understanding and love among people worldwide.

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**Prayer:**

*Lord! Give us always your peace. Let us be healthy and happy. Guide our paths  
and bless each step that we take along the way. Amen.*

## December 17

### Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

#### Today's Readings:

Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17.

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*I was born and lived in Maranhão, with my brother and my family, until I turned 14. We arrived in Brasilia in a very difficult period; my mother needed medical treatment because she had a kidney problem and needed dialysis. It was impossible to follow this treatment in our city and my mother quickly needed a good hospital. Now she is at the University Hospital of Brasilia and she is almost well. When I came to live to Brasilia my challenge was school because education here is more advanced than in Maranhão. Today I can follow lessons with my classroom mates but at the beginning it was very difficult, as well as making new friends, because I had many friends back in Maranhão; not to mention violence, that is more dangerous here than back there.*



**Luna Maria Monteiro Costa**  
Age: 17 – Maranhão, Brazil  
Brasília, DF, Brazil

*My mother is about to finish her treatment and hopes to go back to Maranhão with my 11 years old brother. I am going to stay in Brasilia, because I want to concentrate on my studies and become a journalist; I strongly want this dream to come true.*

---

#### Reflection on migration

The voices of the children consulted and reflected in this summary clearly say that listening and responding to what children have to say about why they move from their homes, their experiences as they journey across countries, borders and seas and what they hope to find and build at their destination, is vital if we are to guarantee that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

- During travel, children, especially if they travel alone, are very vulnerable. Border crossings can be extremely dangerous for children

especially if they don't have the right documentation. Border police and law enforcement authorities should protect children from smugglers and traffickers; they should be trained to interact with children in an unthreatening way and should always respect them. Police and immigration officers across borders should collaborate to protect children not just to stop them from migrating.

- When they arrive at a new destination, children need immediate help, including food, clothing and a safe place to stay. They should not be criminalised for their migration status and should never end up in detention because they are on the move.
- When they arrive at a new destination, children on the move should have the same rights and access to services as local children, including education, health, protection, vocational training and decent work for children of working ages, and family-based care for children in need of alternative care. Children should be able to access such services even if they lack documents. Delays in obtaining documents can have a very negative impact on children.

(Recommendations made by *Save the Children* to 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion, page 9 *Voices of Children on the Move*)

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**Psalm 71: 1-4, 7-8, 17 *In his days justice shall flourish, and peace till the moon fails.***

O God, give your judgement to the king,  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice  
and your poor in right judgement.

May the mountains bring forth peace for the  
people  
and the hills, justice.  
May he defend the poor of the people  
and save the children of the needy.

In his days justice shall flourish  
and peace till the moon fails.  
He shall rule from sea to sea  
from the Great River to earth's bounds.

May his name be blessed for ever  
and endure like the sun.

Every tribe shall be blessed in him,  
all nations bless his name.

---

**Intention:**

We pray for the people who live in places with minimal opportunities to make a living.

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**Prayer:**

*Lord! Give us always your peace. Let my family be healthy and happy. Guide my paths and let there always be good things in my life and in my family. I pray to always have food and that people live in peace. Amen.*

**December 18**  
**Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent**  
**International Day of the Migrant**

**Today's Readings:**

Jeremiah 23: 5-8; Matthew 1: 18-24.

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**Jainito Castro**  
Age: 9 - Timor- Leste  
Brasília, Brazil

*My name is Jainito Castro; I am nine years old and was born in Baucau, Timor-Leste. My life was good in Timor, but there were some sad things like being far from my Brazilian father and thinking that we would never be a united family again. But one day my father came to look for me in Timor and I was so happy because I would be freed from violence. Now it's great here in Brazil we can go out and play, go to the zoo or to the park.*

*Here I have tons of friends and I like to go to school because the professor assigns a lot of tasks and activities. I also like school because in the tests I always get good marks. I smile when I see people because my heart asks me to smile. I love to sing, dance and run because I am happy.*

*I become sad when my parents get nervous with me and punish me and do not let me watch movies. But my sadness doesn't last long because I am creative and invent new games.*

---

**Reflection on migration**

The voices of the children consulted and reflected in this summary clearly say that listening and responding to what children have to say about why they move from their homes, their experiences as they journey across countries, borders and seas and what they hope to find and build at their destination, is vital if we are to guarantee that their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

- Children have the right to a nationality. States should make sure that no child is left stateless.

- Decisions or actions that involve children should not be based on their migration status but on their best interests and should listen to the child's views... Return to their areas of origin should never happen without assessing the situation of each child, of the child's family and the situation they are likely to find in the area of origin. Children should receive long-term support to help them reintegrate and overcome problems when they return to their home communities or to build their skills to integrate and start a new life in a new place or country.
- It is important that social workers, the border police and other adults who interact with children on the move, communicate and collaborate between them across borders to understand the situation of the child and provide the right support.
- Children rely on other young people for support and encouragement. Children's organizations and network are very important for the protection and support of all children who are on the move.

(Recommendations made by Save the Children to 2012 UN CRC Committee Day of General Discussion, page 9 *Voices of Children on the Move*)

**Gracia Mujinga Bodika**

*My name is Gracia Mujinga Bodika, and I was born in Botswana. I arrived in Canada five months ago. Learning another language has not been easy for me. Leaving my father behind and enduring the cold of winter sometimes makes me sad. However, making new friends has helped me to overcome moments of sadness. Until now, I could only dream of taking part in activities that are intended to help others. Doing so activates me and helps me to overcome feelings of loneliness.*



*Age: 13 - Botswana, Africa  
Montreal, Canada*

**Psalm 71: 1-2, 12-13, 18-19 *In his days justice shall flourish, and peace until the moon fails***

O God, give your judgement to the king,  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice  
and your poor in right judgement.  
For he shall save the poor when they cry

and the needy who are helpless.  
He will have pity on the weak  
And save the lives of the poor.

Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel,  
who alone works wonders,  
ever blessed his glorious name.  
Let his glory fill the earth.  
Amen! Amen!

---

**Intention:**

We pray for the children who are often affected by social changes.

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**Prayer:**

*Lord God! Thank you for giving me a family that loves me. I pray for the children who suffer violence, for their sufferings to end and that they can live in love and peace like me. Amen.*

## December 19

### Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

**Marist Anniversary:** 1886, arrival of the first Brothers in Spain.

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**Today's Readings:**

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25; Luke 1: 5-25.

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**Vanessa Manroop**

*Age: 13*

*Original Nationality: Guyanese*

*Place of residence: Montreal, Canada*

*My name is Vanessa Manroop. I come from British Guyana.*

*What has helped me to adapt to this new country is my relationship with Jesus.*

*I believe that dealing with difficulties is easier when I have love in my heart.*

*As a young person coming into this country, I believe that God fills the void that many of us feel in our search for happiness.*



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**Reflection on migration**

- Globally, there are some 35 million migrants under the age of 20, which represents around 15 per cent per cent of the total migrant population.
- Middle and late adolescents (15-19 yrs.) represent the largest group among child and adolescent migrants. Among the 35 million international migrants under 20 years of age, 15 to 19 year olds account for some 33 per cent (11 million) of all migrants under the age of 20, followed by 10-14 year olds who comprise 26 per cent (9 million). Age groups 5 to 9 and 0 to 4 represent 22 per cent (8 million) and 20 per cent (7 million) of the total migrant population less than 20 years of age, respectively.
- Developing countries host a higher proportion of child and adolescent migrants. Around 22 million international migrants under 20 years of age

reside in least developed and developing countries, accounting for 62 per cent of the total migrant population under the age of 20. In contrast, some 13 million migrant children and adolescent reside in developed countries, representing approximately 38 per cent of international migrants fewer than 20 years of age.

(International Migrant Children and Adolescents Facts and Figures - *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs September 2013*)

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**Maciel Alves Balbino dos Santos**

Age: 12 - São Paulo, Brazil  
Natal, RN, Brazil

*When I lived in São Paulo I was fine, because I had many friends. I lived with my father and went looking for birds and played with my friends. My favourite time was spent in Ceará, because most of the members of my family lived there: my godmother, my friends and my older brother. We went fishing, played soccer in a regular field or on the grass and I went out with my friends. Things were different in Ceará. In Ceará, behind the school there was a soccer field with trees that I loved to climb. I remember that once after school I went with a friend to a waterfall and forgot all my things there; when I returned home I was spanked.*

*In Natal: (Río Grande do Norte) at the beginning when I came to live here I didn't like the city because it is very violent. Now I have friends and I like it better here. I am a member of the large social Marist Youth Centre (Centro Marista de la Juventud) and I am studying at the Monsignor Mata School; there are many fights and I complain to the principal but she doesn't do anything.*

*I do not like to come to the CMJ with my mother, because I am old enough to walk on my own. Of all the schools the one that I like best is that of Natal (CMJ); since it is big and has a lot of games such as soccer.*

*- My deepest wish is to win a bike or cell phone and study a lot to become a doctor or fire fighter. Out of all the cities where I lived the one that I liked best was Riacho Pompeu. When I went to live with my grandparents (my mother's parents), I had many friends and loved to play with my brothers. My small brother was born there and I went to see his beautiful little face and it was a great emotion.*

*In Ceará:*

*What struck me most was once, when I went to a bakery with my brothers and we ate so many sweets and all ended up with stomach-ache. And even if our mother spanked us all it was really great. During exams I came out of school and walked through the valley and went to play soccer with my friends. My very favourite day was when I won the uniform; I was so excited that I pulled the shirt off and wore the uniform back home. I had a friend that attached beautiful stickers to my workbook and when I returned back home I liked to look at them; I considered him a smart guy.*

*In São Paulo:*

*What I liked best there was the fact that my mother enrolled me in an APAI school; it is a very good school. At the fourth hour I played ball and at the 6<sup>th</sup> I played with my friends and I even had lunch at school. Everything was fine there. I used to hunt birds there in the house farm. That was the place where I kissed for the first time a girl, my cousin. Maciel saw us and wanted to talk to my mother, but I told her not to and she said that I was a man now. I gave my second kiss in São Gonçalo do Amarante, I was nervous and she told me I didn't know how to kiss and that she wanted to stay with my brother, but nobody is born knowing about these things, Right? She said I am a lousy kisser. I would like to go back to São Paulo to see my father and visit the park I liked so much.*

---

**Psalm 70: 3-6, 16-17 *My lips are filled with your praise, with your glory all the day long.***

Be a rock where I can take refuge,  
A mighty stronghold to save me;  
For you are my rock, my stronghold.  
Free me from the hand of the wicked.

It is you, O Lord, who are my hope,  
my trust, O Lord, since my youth.  
On you I have learned from my birth,  
from my mother's womb you have been my  
help.

I will declare the Lord's mighty deeds  
proclaiming your justice, yours alone.

O God, you have taught me from my youth  
and I proclaim your wonders still.

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**Intention:**

Let us pray that children may find the opportunities to fulfil their dreams.

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**Prayer:**

*Let our Guardian Angel protect us and God bless us, especially my family.  
Amen.*

## December 20

### Friday of the Third Week of Advent

#### Today's Readings:

Isaiah 7: 10-14; Luke 1: 26-38.

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*Everything started when I was a year and three months old. I am originally from Espirito Santo. I was born on 12/01/1997. That year, my family moved to São Paulo because my father had work there. I lived there for ten years. Because I was young, I found it easy to adapt to the lifestyle of people living in São Paulo.*

*Every other year we would visit Espirito Santo in order to visit the family. During that time two of my brothers were born in São Paulo.*

*A better job opportunity developed for my father in Espirito Santo, and so, after ten years, we returned to live where I was born.*

*Moving was a good experience for me and sometimes it provided moments of humour because my accent was somewhat different. It took some time for me to drop my accent and get used to new ways of doing things. I was not accustomed to going to the beach. I had to adjust to other activities as well.*

*In my opinion, adjusting to slight changes along the way helped me to adjust to bigger changes later in life. All in all, life has been good.*

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**Waden Junio Dias da Silva** - Age: 16  
Vila Velha, Espírito Santo, Brazil  
São Paulo, Brazil

#### Reflection on migration

- Significant regional differences exist in the proportion of child and adolescent migrants. Child and adolescent migrants comprise the largest group of the total migrant population in Africa (30 per cent), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (24 per cent), Asia (20 per cent), Oceania (12 per cent), Europe (10 per cent), and North America (9 per cent).
- There are regional variations among child and adolescent migrants. In Africa, the group 15 to 19 years of age represent around 29 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, while the group 0 to 4 represent 22 per cent. In Northern America, migrants between 15 and

19 years of age represent 43 per cent of the total migrant population under the age of 20, while in Latin America and the Caribbean the group 15-19 represent 25 per cent. The group 0 to 4 years of age represents 12 and 24 per cent in Northern America and Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively.

- In Asia and Oceania, the group 15 to 19 represent 29 and 30 per cent, respectively, while the group 0 to 4 years of age represent 23 and 22 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, respectively.
- In Europe, international migrants between 15 and 19 years of age represent 39 per cent of the total migrant population under 20 years of age, while migrants between 0 and 4 represent 14 per cent of all migrants fewer than 20 years of age.

(International Migrant Children and Adolescents Facts and Figures - *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs September 2013*)

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**Psalm 23 1-6: *Let the Lord enter! He is the king of glory***

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,  
the world and all its peoples.  
It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the waters he made it firm

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?  
Who shall stand in in his holy place?  
The man with clean hands and pure heart,  
who desires not worthless things.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord,  
and reward from the God who saves him.  
Such are the men who seek him,  
seek the face of the God of Jacob.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the families who are forced to constant geographical displacement.

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**Prayer:**

*Jesus said to his apostles: "...my peace I give unto you..." Lord, I give you all that I am. Forgive us our faults and look upon the faith of your people. Give us the peace and harmony that only you can give. This I pray in the unity of the Father and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

**December 21**  
**Saturday of the Third Week of Advent**  
**Saint Peter Canisius**

**Today's Readings:**

Song 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18; Luke 1:39-45.

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**Paula Merchan**  
Age: 12 - Ecuador  
Los Andes, Chile

*My name is Paula, I am 12 years old, and I have lived most of my life in Ecuador. There, I lived at the home of my grannies with my mom and my uncle. When I was 10 years old, my parents decided that for the sake of my studies, I had to move to Chile. Although my mom had already told me about this country, at the beginning I got a little depressed, but then I thought about it and I said yes. I was difficult to leave my family, but I knew I was going to be with my daddy who loves me and cares for me.*

*The first year did not go very well. I argued with my dad and missed my mom a lot. But then I gradually got used to it. With my studies, I didn't really do very well; but when I got to the Marists, I noticed there were very good teachers and they welcomed me warmly. Now I am happy and I feel at ease in this country, in Chile.*

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**Reflection on migration**

Since its entry into force in 1990, the CRC has served as catalyst for legislative reform, constitutional amendments, and policies aimed at protecting children's rights. It has also helped to eliminate diverse forms of de jure and de facto discrimination, to promote gender equality, and to establish more effective child protection systems and institutions. Despite the significant impact of the CRC to date, the treaty has not yet been sufficiently applied or promoted amongst policy-makers with regard to protecting the rights of children in the context of migration. Some States Parties also continue to have declarations or

reservations regarding the principle of non-discrimination, with the interpretation that it does not confer the same rights to foreign children as citizen children. On the contrary, the CRC provides both a comprehensive catalogue of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, and clear principles regarding their application to all children, regardless of migration status. Thus, as a legally-binding instrument with virtually universal ratification, the CRC, as the most relevant international child rights instrument, has the potential to play a key role in the protection of children's rights in the context of migration. This potential should be fully explored by policy-makers and stakeholders in the future.

(Committee on the Rights of the Child 2012 Day of General Discussion - *The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration, Background Paper*)

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***Daniela Freitas Bravo***

*I was born in Chosica, Lima, the capital of Peru. My family moved to Brazil, because my father who is Brazilian, was born in Belen; he has always wanted us to get to know the "land" where he was born and my Brazilian relatives.*

*We came to meet the family and we have been living in Brazil for two years. Now I live with my parents and my dog. My mother works as a Spanish teacher and my father works as an auxiliary in a hospital. I miss my family in Peru, especially my cousins, our games and my uncles. When we arrived in Brazil, I had to learn to speak Portuguese and had to do it real fast because I had to study. Today I can communicate and understand Brazilian.*

*I have many new friends in Brazil, but it was hard in the beginning, things are different here compared to Peru. Now I am happy.*

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*Age: 9 - Chosica, Peru  
Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brazil*

**Psalm 32:2-3,11-12,20-21 *Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just; O sing him a song that is new***

Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp,  
with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs.  
O sing him a song that is new,  
play loudly, with all your skill.

His own designs shall stand for ever,  
The plans of his heart from age to age.  
They are happy, whose God is the Lord,  
The people he has chosen as his own.

Our soul is waiting for the Lord.  
The Lord is our help and our shield.  
In him do our hearts find joy.  
We trust in his holy name.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the authorities who work to improve the world situation regarding children.

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**Prayer:**

*Oh Lord! Protect my family and take care of us all. Give us health. Let us have our daily bread. Take care of the children and protect us from violence. Let there be no wars and more love among people. Amen*

## December 22

### Fourth Sunday of Advent

#### Today's Readings:

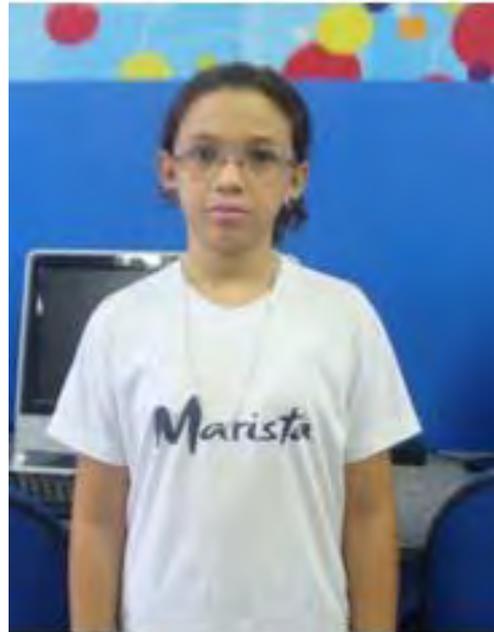
Isaiah 7: 10-14. The virgin will conceive;

Romans 1: 1-7. Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, is the Son of God;

Matthew 1:18-24. Jesus was born of Mary, the betrothed of Joseph, a son of David.

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*My name is Anna Beatriz. I am a student at the red brick Marist school, Champagnat. I am originally from Rio de Janeiro and adjusting to my new surroundings has not been easy for me. When I first came, I didn't know anyone. Things are very different here: the way people talk, the food they eat, and the games that they play. Even though they hardly remembered me when I came, I had to depend on the help of my two cousins to help me to understand the cultural differences. Even though I am not very outgoing by nature, I tried to get to know those in my neighbourhood as soon as I arrived so that I could make new friends. Even though I go to a good school, it was difficult at first because I didn't know anybody. I already have several friends, and I am especially close to one of them. I am now completely adjusted to my new way of living.*



**Anna Beatriz Araujo de Lima**  
Age: 12- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Espírito Santo, Brazil

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#### Reflection on migration

Recent work on child migration from a gender perspective has focused on gender-related impacts and vulnerabilities throughout the migration process, in countries of origin, destination, and during migration journeys (for example in relation to culturally-determined gender roles, education, work, etc.). These studies acknowledge the role of social and cultural structures in shaping gender norms (e.g. the patterns according to which gender-specific roles are defined in the family, community, and society at large) and examine the different impacts these can have on the trajectories of boys and girls who migrate, as well as on those left behind. Furthermore, migration of a parent often entails changes in the previous arrangements concerning the division of

care and other domestic responsibilities within the household. Children left behind often face greater responsibilities, depending on whether the father or the mother has migrated, fulfilling the corresponding roles. For example, children, particularly boys, may leave school in order to look for work and support the household. While remittances generally have a positive impact on girls' schooling, migration of a parent can also affect their school performance when they are expected to take on household chores or care for younger siblings.

(Committee on the Rights of the Child 2012 Day of General Discussion -*The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration, Background Paper*)



*Age: 14 - Haiti  
Montreal, Canada*

### ***Midith Stéphane Colon***

*My name is Midith Stéphan Colon. I am 14 years of age, and I have been in Canada for the past 6 months. I come from Haiti. Moving has been quite a challenge for me, but I have received a lot of support from my family. Coming to a cold climate has not been easy for me because I come from a much warmer climate.*

*I do miss my grandmother and my friends who I have left behind; however, family support and going to church regularly has helped me a great deal.*

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### **Psalm 23: 1-6 *Let the Lord enter! He is the king of glory***

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,  
the world and all its peoples.  
It is he set it on the seas;  
On the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?  
Who shall stand in his holy place?  
The man with clean hands and pure heart,  
who desires not worthless things.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord  
And reward from the God who saves him.

Such are the men who seek him,  
Seek the face of the God of Jacob.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the families who are forced to migrate from their countries to seek new opportunities for their children.

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**Prayer:**

*Thank you, Lord, for your help. Thank you for everything. Thank you for giving me one more day. I couldn't live a single day without you, O Lord.*

## December 23

### Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

### Saint John of Kanty

#### Today's Readings:

Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24; Luke 1: 57-66.

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**Laura Vargas**

Age: 14 - Colombian in Chile  
(Los Andes)

*My name is Laura, I am 14 years old and I was born in a city in Southern Colombia. In that town, all my family, from my grandparents to my uncles and aunts, had been Marist students. Although they were five girls and five males, only the boys had the privilege of joining the Champagnat School in Popayan since at that time it was not coeducational. In that city I learned a lot about Catholicism since they were all very faithful there.*

*For various reasons, my mom and I had to leave Colombia and we got to Chile. The settling down and arrival was easy; but what was difficult was the time that my mom and I spent alone, especially on occasions like Christmas. After some time we discovered that in*

*a nearby town there was a Marist school, so we tried to get in by all means. We succeeded in the year 2012 and I felt very well because I had no trouble making friends and felt at ease. All this makes us very happy, so much that we now have introduced my younger brother to this great Marist family.*

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#### Reflection on migration

Especially within the context of the global economic financial crisis, many countries of origin and destination are enforcing migration laws more severely, including heightening restrictions on legal avenues for migration and employing more harsh deportation and detention policies. In various countries, family reunification regulations have become more severe, imposing new restrictions that make reunification more difficult and inaccessible for many. Irregular migration, particularly of children migrating alone, has increased in part due to these obstacles preventing family reunification. Further restrictions on accessing existing regularization mechanisms, long-term residence status,

and citizenship are also being imposed, further increasing the number of children in an irregular migration situation.

At the same time, literature on South-South migration notes the likelihood that a high proportion of South-South migration occurs irregularly. This is due to a combination of several factors, including, inter alia, strict requirements for regular migration, unclear immigration rules, the level of bureaucracy and high costs associated with regular migration applications, weak enforcement of border controls, difficulties in obtaining travel documents, and large informal employment sectors.

(Committee on the Rights of the Child 2012 Day of General Discussion - *The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration, Background Paper*)

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*I was born in Piauí in the city Campo Maior. When I was 4 years old my mother decided to come to live to Brasília. My father drank a lot, and sometimes hit my mother, my brothers and me. This forced my mother to move to Brasília with me and my three brothers. When my family moved here it was very difficult because my mother didn't have a job. Back then I was very sick, suspected meningitis, I spent almost one month in hospital. My mother was very worried because the doctors said there could be some consequences, but thank God I was fine. Today my mother has a boyfriend that I consider as a father; he helps me in the house work.*



**Rainara Dos Santos Araújo**  
Age: 12- Estado do Piauí, Brazil  
Brasília, Distrito Federal, Brazil

*Our life improved a lot since we moved to Brasilia. Sometimes I remember and feel sorry for my father, who stayed back in Piauí; I am not in touch with him. During vacation we always go to Piaui. What I like best there is my Aunt Celia's house, because I play with my cousins and friends.*

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**Psalm 24: 4-5, 8-9, 10, 14** *Stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.*

Lord, make me know your ways.  
Lord teach me your paths.  
Make me walk in your truths, and teach me:  
for you are God my saviour.

The Lord is good and upright.  
He shows the path to those who stray.  
He guides the humble in the right path.  
He teaches his way to the poor.

His ways are faithfulness and love  
for those who keep his covenant and law.  
The Lord's friendship is for those who revere him;  
to them he reveals his covenant.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the social initiatives supporting migrant families.

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**Prayer:**

*Lord, I want to thank you for all the blessings you have granted to me, for the family I have and for the friends I have found in this new place. Amen.*

*Oh God!*

*Thank you for this day and for my life, my family and because my family and I are healthy. Lord, protect my home, my mother, my three brothers and me. I pray that we may never go without our daily bread and that my family be always protected. I also ask you for a less violent world and more love among people. Amen.*

## December 24 Christmas Eve

**Marist Anniversary:** 1817, Brother Lawrence, the third member of the Institute, joins the community at La Valla; 1836, departure of the first Brothers for Oceania.

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### Today's Readings:

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16; Luke 1:67-79.

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*I will begin by telling you that one of the hardest things that can happen to a person is to leave his or her own country. Firstly, because you have to leave everything you knew and everyone you loved, like family and friends. Then, the adjustment to another culture (depending on the country). My family and I left for Chile in search for a better future. But it was very difficult to adjust since we had to eat their typical dishes, dance their typical dances, etc. things you are not used to. But these can be overcome because in time you get used to them. What mostly affected us were the problems in schools or coexistence with other people because there was always someone to discriminate against you... In the first two schools I attended I was much discriminated and I was beat every day by several kids or they made fun of the way I spoke.*

*Then I started to build up my character and I responded by pushing them or hitting them. They still beat me because there were many of them and I was alone. After that, in 2010, I came to the Marist School "Hermano Fernando", where I have learned to be more tolerant and calm. I made very good friends, although I am suddenly very disrespectful with some people. I hope to change because I don't like much this attitude and it is ugly. I am doing better now: I have adjusted and especially, I have learned to coexist with the other people.*

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**Elkin López Gómez, Age: 16**  
Colombian  
in Chile (Alto Hospicio)

## Reflection on migration

- Among children and adolescents, male migrants outnumber female migrants globally. Globally, there are 90 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under the age of 20.
- Regional differences exist among the proportion of male and female child and adolescent migrants. In North America there are 96 female migrants for every 100 male migrants, while in Latin America and the Caribbean there are 97 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under 20 years of age. In Asia and Oceania there are 82 and 96 female migrants for every 100 male migrants under 20 respectively, while in Europe there are 93 female migrants for every 100 male migrants. In contrast, in Africa there is virtual parity, that is, for every 100 male migrants there are 101 female migrants under the age of 20.

(International Migrant Children and Adolescents Facts and Figures - *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs September 2013*)

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## **Psalm 88: 2-5, 27, 29 I will sing forever of your love, O Lord.**

I will sing for ever of your love, O Lord;  
through all ages my mouth will proclaim your  
truth.

Of this I am sure, that your love lasts for ever,  
that your truth is firmly established as the heavens.

'I have made a covenant with my chosen one;  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
I will establish your dynasty for ever  
and set up your throne through all ages.

'He will say to me: "You are my father,  
my God, the rock who saves me."  
I will keep my love for him always;  
With him my covenant shall last.'

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## **Intention:**

We pray for the institutions that welcome children and facilitate their social integration.

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**Prayer:**

*Lord, allow for all people to coexist well. Help the migrants so they may meet their objectives and make it forward. Keep them safe and don't abandon them, Lord. Thank you for everything you have given me and given to others because all the good that happens in the world is truly your deed. Thank you Lord.*

# December 25 Christmas Season Nativity of the Lord



## Today's Readings (for during the day):

Isaiah 52: 7-10. All the ends of the earth can see the salvation of our God.

Hebrews 1: 1-6. He has spoken to us through the Son.

John 1: 1-18. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.



**Denyse Loja Iojano** – Age: 17  
Zamora Chinchipe, Ecuador  
Catalonia, Spain

*Hello, my name is Denyse. I was born in Ecuador in the province of Zamora Chinchipe. When I was four years old my mother came here to Spain to work, to try to provide a better life for me and my sister Norma. The two of us were raised by our grandparents on a farm. Six years ago my mother tried to bring my sister and me to live with her, but she couldn't because they asked for a lot of documentation and they denied the visa to come to the country. Three years later my mother tried again; this time she was able to bring me but they again denied my sister a visa.*

*I arrived here on August 10, 2010 at 11:00 p.m.; to tell the truth, it was difficult for me to accustom myself to the time because it was 11:00 p.m. and had just recently got dark. Where I used to live, it always got dark about 7:00 or 8:00.*

*One of the things that cost me most upon arriving in Catalonia was to be so far away from all the people I lived with in Ecuador; when I began school I felt bad because my classmates all spoke Catalan and I couldn't understand anything they said.*

*I refused to make friends because it seemed strange to me the way the students here related to and treated the teachers; in Ecuador I was taught to treat teachers and other adults with respect. It cost me to see that here young*

*people did not act the same; I didn't know how to react to these things and I felt very alone when with my new classmates.*

*Nowadays I feel very good here because I have more opportunities to study and to do well. My dream is to be a business woman and to have my own shop. The future here also permits me to discover more things about myself: I love reading, I can do things I never did back in Ecuador (like going downtown with my friends or going to the movies, getting to know people of different cultures, from whom I learn a lot).*

*Regarding my family, my mother, whose name is Rosa, has always supported me, helping me in every possible way. I have four siblings. My older sister, Norma, continues to live in Ecuador, and the three younger ones were all born and are being raised and educated here, in Catalonia, with my mother and me. Their names are Juana, Leidy and Jhofre, and they're always with me making me smile; I very much miss my older sister.*

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### **Reflection on migration**

The situation of all children in the context of migration is of major concern, given their greater vulnerability to human rights violations. This is a diverse group including both children with regular and irregular migration status. Although children in an irregular migration situation are the most at risk of human rights violations across law, policy and practice, children with regular migration status are also vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion from basic rights and services. In addition, they also face practical challenges, such as, inter alia, language barriers and a lack of awareness on the rights that migrants are entitled to – both on the part of service providers and migrant families. Even with regular status, migrant families often do not have equal access to social protection measures, and are at risk of poverty, marginalization, and social exclusion.

(Committee on the Rights of the Child 2012 Day of General Discussion - *The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration, Background Paper*)

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### **Psalm 97:1-6 *All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.***

Sing a new song to the Lord  
for he has worked wonders.  
His right hand and his holy arm  
have brought salvation.

The Lord has made known his salvation;  
has shown his justice to the nations.  
He has remembered his truth and love  
for the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.  
Shout to the Lord, all the earth,  
ring out your joy.

Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp  
with the sound of music.  
With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
Acclaim the king, the Lord.

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**Intention:**

We pray for the institutions working in the care of children and young people worldwide, particularly migrants.

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**Prayer:**

*I would like to ask God that my whole family continue to be united as we have so far and I would also like to ask him for future opportunities, like mine, for those young people of the whole world who don't have the means to do well.  
Amen.*



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