

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Matthew 2:13-23

Jesus as a political refugee

King Herod realised after a while that the Wise Men had cheated him., when they didn't return after seeing the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. He was furious, and gave orders to kill all boys aged two or under in and around Bethlehem. He thought that in this way he would be quit the new-born "King of the Jews".

But Jesus wasn't killed. When the Wise Men had gone away, Joseph had a dream one night. An angel of God appeared to him and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him."

Joseph got up and left the same night for Egypt together with Mary and the child. They stayed there until king Herod died. Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph again, and the family left Egypt and returned to Israel. According to Matthew, they were afraid to stay in Judea, because Archelaus, the son of Herod, had become king there. So they went to Galilee and settled in the town of Nazareth.

Discuss:

Of the four gospel writers, only Matthew includes this story. Perhaps in order to point out the parallel to the story of the Exodus in the Old Testament for contemporary Jews, and to show the fulfilment of a prophecy in the Old Testament (Matthew 2:15, "This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son'.")

God came to Earth as a little child. There wasn't room for him in the inn. Born in a stable of a lowly woman – and Jesus wasn't many days old when the family had to flee.

- How do you think this experience influenced Jesus' family and his upbringing?
- Do you know of anyone today who has had a similar experience?
- What do you think this story can mean for people who have had to flee for their lives today?

STORIES FROM NORWAY

MEET A MAN FROM PERU, 20 YEARS OLD

I fled to Norway because I was persecuted by government forces in the area where I lived. I have never bothered about politics. My family owns a small village store that my brothers and sisters and I run. Suddenly I found myself in cross-fire between the guerrilla and government soldiers. Both sides obviously thought that I collaborated with the other side. They must have mistaken me for someone else. I was subject to long interrogations by the police, but I had no idea what I was accused of. They tortured me to try to get me to reveal the names of the local guerrilla leaders. But I knew nothing. They let me go, but said they would soon interrogate me again. The guerrilla threatened my parents and my brothers and sisters, and said they would take revenge if I betrayed anyone. It was all so absurd, so unreal. After several months'

pressure, I couldn't stand it any more and left for the capital city. Some acquaintances had told me about Norway, that people here are so humane. That anyone who came here would be given food, money and clothing. My parents used all their savings to buy the plane ticket. The plane landed at Fornebu on Christmas Day. I was in a bare cell for three days before being sent to an asylum reception centre. I was so scared. In my eyes policemen are unpredictable, evil. Why shouldn't Norwegian policemen also be like that? I am scared of authorities. Here in Norway I was assigned a lawyer who was to help me with paper work and applications, but he was paid by the Norwegian state, so how could I trust him?

After ten months at the reception centre, my application for asylum has been rejected. I have to go home again. My situation in Peru will be even more dangerous than when I left. I ran away, and that proves that I am guilty! They will soon find out that I have returned if I go back to my village. At the same time I long to see my family again. I hope nothing has happened to them after I left. I haven't spoken to them since then.