

In Old Testament times the Hebrew people became immigrants. They migrated to Egypt, where they flourished until a new Pharaoh came into power. He made them slaves. One day God spoke from a burning bush to Moses, and told him to lead the people out of slavery into freedom. Pharaoh didn't want to let the people go, but he did after 10 plagues convinced him. In the tenth plague a destroying angel slaughtered the first born of every living thing. But the Hebrew families were spared. God had told them to have a last supper that night. They were to slaughter a lamb and eat it with their families and neighbors. They were to take some of the blood from the lamb and smear it on the doors of their homes. In that way, the destroying angel would "pass over" those homes, sparing the children. The people packed up so quickly they made unleavened bread so they wouldn't have to wait for the dough to rise. When they got as far as the Red Sea, the waters parted, and they crossed the border into freedom. It was dangerous, but they wanted a better life for their families.

Each year the Jewish people remember this event at their Passover meal. Today's psalm was probably written for this occasion: "The cup of salvation I will take up," it says, "and I will call upon the name of the Lord." We Christians remember this story on the night of Jesus' Last Supper. We remember our Jewish ancestors – our immigrant ancestors. They moved to a land that was not their own, and they inherited it as the Promised Land.

Recently congress has worked on legislation that would address immigration in our country. It is estimated that we have 11 million undocumented immigrants, many of whom have placed themselves at risk in search of a better life for themselves and their families. We have some of them here in northwest Missouri. Some people here are angry about it. Others have helped them or hired them. We all benefit from the low wages paid to immigrants. A recent cartoon shows a woman pushing a shopping cart through the produce section of a grocery. There's a sign on top of a pile of oranges. It says, "Hand-picked by U.S. citizens. 3 oranges for \$20."

The House of Representatives passed a resolution a couple of months ago introducing harsh penalties for undocumented persons in the United States, and for anyone who assisted them, be they priest, doctor, nurse or teacher. Several Catholic bishops told their flocks that if that resolution became law, they should ignore it. The bishops argued that welcoming the stranger should never become a felony in the United States, nor should feeding the hungry.

This earth is not our ultimate homeland. We will all be immigrants one day, hoping to cross the border of heaven. In this eucharist, at this supper, Jesus gives us his body and blood. He lets us drink now of the cup of salvation. In this eucharist we have a foretaste of the life that is to come. We also get a foretaste whenever we live now as we will then, when we feed the hungry, welcome strangers, listen to their stories, and root out racism, whenever we realize that all of us are one in Christ.