

Today -- up in Mineral Point-- Marilee and I have found ourselves in the midst of a weekend of celebration of all things Cornish and Celtic -- including Pendarvis historic site tours, Celtic knot quilting workshops, pottery demonstrations, the taste of Mineral Point. The 26th Annual Cornish Festival and Celtic Celebration over these days presents a long list of events and opportunities including a hymn sing right here beginning at 2:30 with a tea to follow. But that Cornish heritage, of course extends itself throughout the area, including to Platteville.

Because of this special weekend up the road in Mineral Point, I find it is natural to think of Cornish people emigrating from Cornwall. But, before we do, I would like to join Fr. John Floberg—from Standing Rock North Dakota who visited us in late April—in reminding all of us that we are standing on ancestral grounds that stretch into the past well beyond the 1820s and 30s and the arrival of Cornish miners lured to this region by the promise of lead. We are standing on the ancestral ground of the Ho-Chunk people and also, of the Sauk and of the Fox peoples whose footprint on the land was light and who also had an interest in lead and in the smelting of silver.

Diaspora is a Greek term that means simply *scattered abroad*. It applies to the scattering of Jews following the Babylonian Exile in 586 BC—Jews living outside of Palestine.

But this term for scattering also has a wider meaning. By the time we move into the New Testament the term also applies (in I Peter) to the scattering of Christians who live apart from Jerusalem in parts of Asia Minor. And from there the term captures all sorts of exiles, all sorts of migrations – including the forced migrations of Indigenous peoples around the world as well as the current migrations of Hispanic peoples seeking refuge across our own borders. 'Diaspora' captures migrations of all sorts of ethnic groups into this country, groups coming in waves, including miners and farmers from Cornwall and Wales. *Guide me O thou Great Jehovah pilgrim through this promised land*. The hymn has resonance with so many peoples.

Beginning in the 1820s, the first white miners drifted into this region. They had seen the lead that especially Native American women had mined and were selling and they drifted into the region, digging here and there, and living in holes in the ground that they themselves had dug, the human animal mimicking the wild animal with their badger holes.

Gradually in the 1830s, in several places, badger holes were replaced by neat stone cottages, and shallow diggings by deep mine shafts as the area—described by one Episcopal clergyman as a moonscape—began to take shape. Gone were the trees in the upheaval of the land but gradually a community established itself and a new order began. The communities Mineral Point and Linden and Platteville and other towns began to form.

On this weekend in which we are invited to consider especially the migrations of Cornish and other peoples into this region that we now call our own, I am also mindful of the *diaspora* that has been occurring in our own time. This diaspora now is fast disappearing from the news cycle – a diaspora of desperate people riding trains north through Mexico, peoples from especially Central America, coming in groups for protection, some picked up and sent back, some abandoned and dying alone in the vast borderland deserts, some victimized and murdered, some arriving and suddenly separated from their children, some coming in their teenage years, against the advice of their parents already here in the States, only to be incarcerated as minors—coming north for freedom only to be imprisoned, their dreams put on hold at best or permanently shattered.

But they are not alone. The scattering of peoples is a part of our experience around the world. According to the United Nations Refugee Organization, 68.5 million people have been displaced from their homes around the world. 25.8 million of these are refugees and among this group over 50% are under the age of 18. Children. And 57% of refugees around the world now come from just three countries: Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. Receiving most of the world's refugees are Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Uganda and Turkey.

Diaspora including the scattering of children: As we know, Jesus has a unique relationship with children. That relationship was put on display in our Gospel lesson last Sunday when Mark tells us that Jesus picked up a child and placed the child in the midst of the disciples while he was teaching. He then said *Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me and who welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.*

Our Gospel lesson today is taken from a passage that follows just a few verses later.

We should think of Jesus as still holding that young child in his arms—the one he picked up just a few verses earlier. And now he says: *If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown in the sea.*

Welcoming the stranger. Welcoming the penniless refugee. Welcoming the child. I wonder: in the early days of Mineral Point and Platteville, how many Cornish miners living in their badger holes were living on the edge, the very thin edge of hope?

And today? How many displaced children and their parents, all around the world, children playing in the dirt in refugee camps, detained in special facilities, riding on trains, crowded in boats in the Mediterranean. How many children--how many families-- are a part of a scattered people, living on the very edge of hope and of life itself?

Jesus tells us that we are supposed to welcome them. He tells us that when we welcome them, we welcome him and also the one who sent him. Just three plus weeks ago, we welcomed 275 kids at the Opera House for an afternoon of films. Local kids from three area schools. Perhaps, having done this, we might also consider welcoming others --even from a distance. Think about it. Pray about it.

In the name of God-- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.