

Into all the world – Reflections for Lent 2021

Week 2 – 28th February
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The Road to Reynosa

Near the north eastern border of Mexico with the United States is a road from the town of Nuevo Laredo to Reynosa. It is a two lane road [similar to a British 'B' road] through dense scrubland more than the height of an average man – the kind of territory where many things could be hidden. Along the road there are often checkpoints. Some operated by official organisations such as police, others posing as official organisations, but actually operated by Cartel members [organised crime gangs]. It can be difficult to tell the difference, especially for a newcomer to the area.

Many stories are told of incidents along that road. Teenage boys [known as hawks] caught up with gangs are often trained to unobtrusively track travellers and report movements to their masters. Cars can be stopped, valuables extorted, guns pointed, people kidnapped and disappeared. Travelling that road is best done with an experienced guide, someone who is alert to the signs of danger, and aware how to respond if stopped. As a stranger in that place the advice is often to say nothing if stopped, and to give only basic information if challenged.

The town of Reynosa has the reputation of being the most dangerous in Mexico. Cartels operate openly – they 'call the shots', sometimes literally, leaving little doubt that they are dominant. One wonders how it must feel to live where one is constantly looking out for danger, feeling a constantly threatening atmosphere, wondering whether friend and family will be safe today, will your belongings be extorted from you? Will even a trip to buy food end in tragedy?

Travelling in fear is common for many travellers, especially those who become migrants or refugees, for there will always be those who prey upon others in lesser circumstances. Stories of travellers in the Bible make us aware of robbers and thieves waiting to attack them. Stories of travellers seeking to take the Gospel to new places have related many dangers on the way.

Potential dangers do not stop people travelling. Jesus knew his journey into Jerusalem was dangerous, so as we approach Easter, journeying in our different ways through Lent let us reflect on the ways and means, and the various roads we travel.



To Ponder: How do you decide whether a risk is worth taking? Would you take a personal risk to be able to help others? How much risk are you prepared to take in your journey of life? How does this relate to your faith? Has your faith been strengthened when you have taken a risk for what you believe in?

Prayer: *Loving God, we take many journeys during our lives. Our whole lives are a kind of journey. From time to time there will be dangers and challenges. Help us to be alert not only to the dangers, but also to your presence right there with us every step of the way. Teach us to act wisely and trust fully. Amen.*

Bible link: 2 Chronicles 15: 1–8a; Luke 10: 30–35

Hymns: Singing the Faith: 485 When we are living we are in the Lord. [A traditional Mexican hymn]
478 Thank you, O God, for the time that is now