

My dear Little Flower,

Last February 25th, I accompanied four members of our RCIA candidates - Steven & Ellen, Isabela & Sofia - at the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Newark. It was a beautiful prayer service (not Mass) welcoming our RCIA candidates, while we invited and called them for a continuing conversion with us. It is beautiful to have this time of prayer and praise with them at the Cathedral (we got the front row seat!) during our Lenten journey, which echoes the candidate's invitation for a journey through the desert, a conversion of heart, a turning away from sin and towards God, a transformation from within the members of the Body of Christ.

This week, we hear from the Exodus Road. Their international organization's mission is "*to disrupt the darkness of modern-day slavery by partnering with law enforcement to fight human trafficking crime, equipping communities to protect the vulnerable, and empowering survivors as they walk into freedom*". It very much reminds me of the story of the Israelites "passing over the Red Sea" to be led by God to escape slavery and move towards freedom. The journey of our brothers and sisters who suffer the pangs of human trafficking is relevant to our own spiritual journey as Christian Catholics whenever we gather and celebrate the paschal pilgrimage of Jesus Christ through the season of Lent. Let us open our hearts to the suffering and struggles of our brothers and sisters who are seeking refuge from slavery to freedom. Let us unite our prayers this 2nd week of Lent with theirs and those who help them.

Your parish priest,
Fr JC Merino