

The plane has now taken off; the farewells have been made; passports checked; the last words said; now for a period of time you are cocooned inside this flight, this *waka-vuka*. It speeds your way to the uncertainties of a new life, in a new land, into a company of strangers whose ways of doing things are not the same as those with which you are familiar. You land; you come down to earth again and the first phase of a new life, a new journey lies before you.

You are a migrant; the Tahitian theologian, Celine Hoioire, will describe you as a *hoto painu*, a floating seed. You are now living in diaspora; you inhabit a hyphen. You dwell in between and betwixt two cultures—Fijian, Korean, Filipino, Chinese, Indian, Sri Lankan, Samoan, Kiwi, Scottish whatever and Australian: the hyphen is like a bridge between the two: you are in the process of acquiring a double vision—but let's not be too confident about this transformation.

The act of migration is like a rupture: it represents a break, a breach; part of you disappears from conversation because those in whose company you now move know little about your former life. They do not know the intimacy of where you have come from and you do not know so well the immediate past of those with whom you now dwell.

One Australian sociologist has described migration as an ongoing trauma which is not felt forever with the intensity that word might suggest; but it is a rupture; it is like a trauma that lies beneath the surface of things: it is what the German theologian, one of the greats of the 20th century, Jürgen Moltmann, has called, a companion experience.

What on earth has all this talk of being a migrant, living in diaspora, being a *hoto painu*, got to do with silent night, come all ye faithful, away in a manger, hark the herald angels sing, joy to the word—in other words, with Christmas Day? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into

being 4 in him was life,[\[a\]](#) and the life was the light of all people. 14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us

Around the turn of the millennium there was a notable Christian thinker by the name of Jung Young Lee. He was a Korean who had migrated to California. He wrote a book which Jo Mar, one of my first Fijian students, described as a 'wet eye' book by which he meant that it captured something of what he had experienced, and what he felt about life and about faith.

Jung Young Lee looked back to this passage taken from John's prologue—a gospel which, like Mark, has no Christmas story. He came up with the novel idea that in this gospel Jesus was like the divine emigrant. Time and time again in this gospel there are questions asked about who he is and where has he come from. The obvious answer is Nazareth, but the signs he performs, the I am sayings he utters lead to that question, where are you from ...

The prologue informs us that, though he is not named Jesus, he is the Word made flesh; he was with God; it was through him creation, light and life come into being; this stage is much greater than a manger scene in Bethlehem. It is the whole of time and space..... And he leaves that world, like a migrant, to dwell with us, with humanity, and being found in human form he possesses a double vision: he knows what it is like to be born, live and die as a human being and he knows what it is like to be One with the one whom he calls Father, God.

Jung Young Lee gave this Jesus of John's gospel a hyphen as well: Jesus-Christ. The humanity and the divinity. Christmas Day celebrates the humanity, the vulnerability, the Christ. It celebrates the presence of God with us in this form. But it signifies something much more as well: For John the Word made flesh is like a divine emigrant. In this time of reconstruction—a legacy of Covid 19 as well as all of the changes in the mission—it is well worth reminding ourselves this Christmas that lying behind all planning, all our hopes and misgivings—we are called to respond to the divinity of Christ as well as the humanity of this divine emigrant. We are of the moment. Clive Pearson