

*Holy Family Immigration*, by Wayne Lacson Forte

art selection and comment by [John Kohan](#) in the [December 29, 2021](#) issue



(Used by permission of the artist)

Born in the Philippines, educated in the United States and Europe, and married in Brazil, Wayne Lacson Forte makes religious art with a global perspective. He also creates illustrative works specific to the liturgical needs of faith communities in Southern California, where he now lives. (His work appeared on the *Century's* December 15 cover.) The two strands come together in this charcoal drawing illustrating the flight into Egypt, the grim narrative at the end of the Christmas story cycle, which takes us from the realm of angelic visits to shepherds into an all too familiar world where displaced people by the millions abandon their homes in hope of starting a new life elsewhere.

Forte's bold sketch poses the question of what might have happened had the Holy Family arrived in Egypt only to be turned away. The silhouette of Joseph and Mary with the Christ Child in arms on a donkey is well known from countless depictions across the centuries, but the shadowy, gun-toting guard and snarling dog, the razor-edged barbwire and the bewildering grid of bilingual signage make the image disturbingly contemporary. Says Forte: "The plight of refugees, whether they be

modern-day victims of violence looking for a safe place to shelter or the family chosen by God to bear his Son into the world, has not changed.”