Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“What is your opinion?” (Matt 18:12).

*Is 40:1-11; Matt 18:12-14*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iku1oADXhA0

The above link is to Pope Francis' visit to the refugee camp on the Island of Lesbos during his just completed visit. How many political leaders have we seen visiting these holding stations where thousands of desperate migrants from the Middle East await some response from developed nations whose borders are closed? Very few, if any.

The global refugee crisis, caused by wars, climate disasters, poverty and the collapse of civil order, has been the focus of intense concern for the pope. An estimated 63 million asylum seekers and refugees are now in camps or seeking passage by land or sea, including those from Central America waiting in Mexico for legal processing to the United States.

The pope's message has gone from appeals to indignation as he moves among the victims of displacement caused by first world conflicts being played out in third world nations and because of a global economy that profits from disparity and exploitation of workers and their families in poor countries.

As Pope Francis moves along the barricades in the video, he stops to touch and bless children and listen to their parents' stories. Today's reading from Isaiah is made visible in his compassion:

*Like a shepherd he feeds his flock;*

*in his arms he gathers the lambs,*

*Carrying them in his bosom,*

*and leading the ewes with care.*

Today's Gospel of the lost sheep confronts the world with the question*, "What is your opinion?"* Will not a good shepherd go in search of one lost sheep over the ninety-nine who are not lost? Can the wealthy nations be indifferent to the desperation of so many, to the fate of mothers and children as winter approaches, to fellow human beings who want only to return home or find productive lives in host nations begging for workers? Will the world fail its most basic test of humanity by abandoning others in crisis, as though there were no judgment awaiting us in our own hour of need?

Will millions of Christians celebrate Christmas this year as though the plight of the Holy Family were not evident in the lives of real people for whom there is no room at the inn, only barren hillsides to seek shelter, abandoned without welcome or compassion?  Can we hear the words of Jesus at the end of today's Gospel? "It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost" (Matt 18:14).

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