

**August 30, 2015**  
**22nd Day in Ordinary Time**

**Give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations**  
(from the first reading of Deuteronomy)

*Are we willing to join Abraham and Sara in leaving our old ways  
for a new land that God will show us?*

**That's The Question**

What is this new land Abraham and Sara were searching for which God will show them? Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr sets stage for this question.

*“God has a hard time getting us to join Abraham and Sarah in leaving our country and our family for a new land that God will show us. Yet their story of “leaving their country and their family for a new land that God will show them” is the paradigm of our journey in faith. The difficulty is that the new and different is always a threat to the small self. Unless there is something strong enough to rearrange our worldview, call our assumptions into question, and engage our heart and body, we will seldom move to new interior or exterior places. We will remain content simply to listen to new ideas and judge them to be true or false, whether we “like” them or not.*

**A Little Practice**

The new land we are searching for is the willingness to consider issues seriously before agreeing or disagreeing with them. We are going to do a little practice now in doing this. I am going to read nine statements from an article in the August 17, 2015 issue of the National Catholic Reporter by Coleman McCarthy inviting us to listen without judging whether we think they are right or not . . . to consider whether we are willing to join Abraham and Sara in searching for new ways of looking at these issues.

McCarthy says: *“Pope Francis will not go beyond his play-it-safe verbiage next month when he addresses Congress” . . .*

1. Unless he states it is time to close the 700 U.S. military bases around the globe;
2. Unless he expresses support for those members of Congress who believe the moment is long overdue to use the moral force of diplomacy rather than the force of bombs to settle disputes;
3. Unless he expresses dismay that among developed nations, the United States is near the bottom in the percentage of its foreign aid to the world's poor;
4. Unless he aligns himself with the members of Congress who oppose the death penalty;
5. Unless in Washington he takes time to comfort John Wojnowski, who was molested by a Catholic priest and who almost daily for the past 17 years and nearly 5,000 days has stood in front of the Vatican embassy with signs denouncing the pedophilia cover-ups;
6. Unless he offers an apology from the church for its complicity in past assaults against natives and minorities, as he did on his July visit to Latin America;
7. Unless he is self-critical about the Vatican's immorality, including banking scandals and sex crimes;
8. Unless he walks across the way from the White House to bless Concepcion Picciotto and her friends who have camped in Lafayette Park since 1981 to protest nuclear weapons, only to be regularly arrested for their efforts;
9. Unless Pope Francis addresses Congress this month on the immorality of building nuclear weapons when, as studies in 2013 show, that if India and Pakistan each exchanged fifty 15 kiloton-size bombs -- a tiny fraction of the size of the warheads in the U.S. and Russian arsenals -- they would create immense firestorms that would quickly envelope the planet with layers of dense stratospheric smoke causing the starvation of up to 2 billion people, conditions that have not existed on this planet for 18,000 years.

McCarthy says that unless Pope Francis addresses these issues directly before Congress next month, “*he will not go beyond his play-it-safe verbiage.*”

### **The Point**

This homily is not about where we stand on these issues. Let me say that again: this homily is not about where you and I stand on these issues. What the homily is asking is:

*“Were we able to join Sarah and Abraham in searching for a new land in which we are willing to consider issues seriously before immediately agreeing or disagreeing with them.”*

This is not easy to do. It means being willing to move beyond our comfort zones, beyond our unquestioned assumptions, beyond the caution and insecurity of our egos - our small self.

But having difficulty with what is new and different need not always be a threat to us. When there is something strong enough to rearrange our worldview, call our assumptions into question, and engage our hearts as well as our bodies, we will move to new interior or exterior places. We will no longer remain content simply to judge new ideas to be right or wrong before actually listening to them.

### **This is giving evidence of our wisdom and intelligence to the nations**

*Let us be willing to join Abraham and Sara in their search for the new land of seeing and understanding contemporary issues before our preconceived and unreflected certitudes quickly take up their defensive positions.*