

30B '19

I will gather them from the ends of the world, the blind and the lame, mothers and those with child. I will console them and guide them; I will lead them to brooks of water on a level road so that none may stumble, says the Lord.

This is such a beautiful promise, so comforting and reassuring - the Lord leading us on a level road so that we may not stumble. There are so many of us on rough roads, stumbling our way along - in our world, in our country and in our Church. We tend to see ourselves as the ones who are the rough road, but what about all those others who are also on that rough road.

We are watching a growing column of thousands of people walking up from Honduras and other South American countries northward towards the US. We hear of reactions of anger and compassion. How do we begin to deal with this?

Five young members of the Missionaries of Jesus in September staged a sit-in in India to demand the arrest of a bishop accused of rape, reports NCR Oct 25th. A priest who was a key witness in their case suffered a mysterious death. Police guards have been deployed at the nuns' convent, amid reports of threats against the sisters. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, including their own community, has refused to back the nuns because they didn't use the word, rape, in their letters to church officials. "*We will not succumb to any pressure,*" the nuns say. How do we begin to deal with something like this?

Just this Saturday, we are faced with another shooting, this time in a synagogue in Pittsburgh. It's another story of fear and anger. How do we begin to deal with such cases as this?

Let us listen to some biblical verses that can shed light on our minds and souls :

Dt. 15:11: "*There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.*"

Zechariah 7:9-10: This is what the Lord Almighty said: '*Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.*'"

2 Timothy 4:3-5: *"For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine, but following their own desires, will surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears. They will stop listening to the truth and will wander off to fables."*

Colossians 3:12: *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."*

Mt. 5:23-24: *"So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."*

John 4:19-20: *"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen."*

1 John 3:17: *"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?"*

Mt. 25:35-40: *"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. For whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me."*

What these scriptures are showing us is how to deal with the difficult situations we face. They don't offer solutions to our problems, they show us how to *face* them. They don't protect us from facing hard times, they sustain us in doing so.

Getting started in living in this Christ-like way is the hard part. It always seems like we are just getting started. But when we keep at it, we notice something beginning to change in us from anger to peace, from fear to compassion, from hate to love. We don't go through this process just once and then we have it, we go through it again and again. Doing so triggers an awareness in us of a larger presence that is stronger and more peaceful than anything that can ever threaten us, and we will continue to discover in an ever deeper way the gift of living the way of scripture. As the Upiq Eskimos say, *"Ivory and the human heart are carved with bitter tools."*

The less we live the way the scriptures invite us, the more we will react to difficult times with fear and anger. The more we live the way scriptures invite us, the more we will clothe ourselves with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; the more we will seek reconciliation with our sisters and brothers; the more we will treat those who are difficult with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; the more we will show kindness to those in prison; the more we will invite in the stranger, clothe those who have nothing and visit the sick. The more we try to live the way of Christ, the more we will find ourselves doing what Jesus said:

I will gather them from the ends of the world, the blind and the lame, mothers and those with child. I will console them and guide them; I will lead them to brooks of water on a level road so that none may stumble.

Who else but Mary knows what it is like to face such times.

HAIL MARY TO PICTURE