

Tuesday's Gospel: No One is Superfluous

Gospel for Tuesday in the Second Week of Advent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 18:12-14*)

“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Commentary

Jesus is the shepherd pictured anonymously in the story of the lost sheep. His flock is immense; the hundred sheep in this parable represent all mankind. But no matter how numerous his flock is, he refuses to accept losing even one of his sheep. If Jesus is missing just one sheep, he feels that his flock is incomplete. He will go looking for the one that is lost through the ravines and valleys, and won't stop until he finds it.

In the "little ones" that the Father doesn't want to see perish we can see each person portrayed in his or her uniqueness. The Church is the flock of Jesus, and no one there is so insignificant that they aren't needed; no one is superfluous or can be set aside without any qualms. As Pope

Francis frequently reminds us, no one can be viewed as an object to be discarded.

Today's Gospel passage fills us with security. We can go through bad times in our lives; we are weak and can become lost along the way. Jesus, however, will always go looking for us. He will give us a new opportunity to return to his side. Hopefully we will be humble enough to recognize our mistakes then and open ourselves to God's grace.

This passage also places demands on us. To be Christians is to share the feelings of Jesus and never be indifferent when we find out that someone has strayed from the flock. We are called to set out and find that person in order to help them escape from their isolation. With our prayer, time and understanding, we can be instruments to bring them back to the Church's life.

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