

9c. Living Mercy: Founders



GATHERING SPACE

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

(attributed to St Francis of Assisi)

The word solidarity is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few ... (Pope Francis)

> How did St Francis go in search of the lost sheep of his day?

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus often uses parables and images of things lost and found to highlight the nature of God, who in this story is patience, love and compassion. The sub-text reminds us that no one is too unimportant to be found or helped or engaged in relationship. Lost and found - you can't have one without the other and this reading asks us to consider - lost from where? lost by whom? While a rational response would be to look after the ninety-nine sheep that you have, Jesus is reminding us that the lost sheep is also precious in God's sight. Like Pope Francis who urges us to 'go to the outskirts' to build inclusive communities, St Francis also defied

social conventions to live in harmony with the poor and all of creation.

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So Jesus told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15)

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- > The parable of the Lost Sheep challenges all of us to be alert for those who are lost.
- > Who are the lost sheep in our society, ministry, world?
- > How do Franciscan ministries find the lost and celebrate their return?

PRAYER

God of mercy and tenderness

Help us to see the lost sheep in our everyday lives.

Give us the courage and vision of St Francis to live with love and compassion.

May we be ever mindful of the challenges in our Board work which call for inclusivity and a merciful response.

For Franciscan ministries around the world which shepherd those who are lost

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For struggling families and victims of domestic violence

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For those who struggle to find work and direction in life

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For the homeless and those for whom home is not welcoming

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For our world which cries out for merciful climate policies

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

Give us courage, in this Year of Mercy, to open the doors of our hearts to the power of a merciful way of living and being

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

(Pause for any special intentions)

FOR THE END OF THE MEETING

Let us ask the Lord: Lord, grant that we be more and more united, never to be instruments of division; enable us to commit ourselves, as the beautiful Franciscan prayer says, to sowing love where there is hatred; where there is injury pardon; and union where there is discord. (Pope Francis)

Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.

While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart.

Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible. (Francis of Assisi)

Illustration from Sieger Köder 'Art and Inspiration'. Pope Francis: *The Church of Mercy* (2014), pp26, 32. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Quotes from St Francis of Assisi retrieved from <https://www.goodreads.com>.

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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