



Franciscan Friars
Holy Name Province
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October 4, 2015
Feast of St. Francis

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

St. Francis was moved by the Holy Spirit to recognize the lepers of his day as his sisters and brothers — and to care for them. His compassionate response was a major step in his growth in holiness.

Pope Francis has recently insisted: “No one can pretend not to know!” about the millions of refugees and emigrants now flooding into Europe who have been compelled to flee the violence and inhuman conditions in their homelands. From Syria alone, 4.1 million have fled since 2011. They are in need of immediate humanitarian assistance. Pope Francis pleads: “Please do not abandon the victims of this crisis, even if the world’s attention were to lessen.”

The current tragedy in Europe has its counterpart closer to home on the southern border of the United States. There too, so many fleeing violence and inhuman conditions present us with what is, above all, a moral issue so often mentioned in the Bible: the call to care for the most vulnerable. Deuteronomy 15:11, for example, counsels us: “Open your hand to the poor and the needy neighbor in your land.”

In the face of such staggering human need, what should our response be? What can we do? That is a question that each of us — individually and as members of faith communities — must struggle with. Possible responses are many and varied.

Perhaps some may wish to donate to relief efforts already underway by Catholic Relief Services or Caritas’s European Refugee and Migrant Crisis targeted special fund. Others may wish to work locally with Catholic Charities in organizing services and “receiving homes” for refugees in our own communities. Others may choose to write government leaders, urging the United States to accept at least 100,000 refugees from Syria alone in the coming year. Others may want to urge Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform in our country. Congress could be asked to do more with the international community to stop the flow of weapons into the Middle East and to find a solution to the conflicts there.

There is much that we can do. Perhaps the only response that would **NOT** be acceptable is indifference or paralysis before so urgent and massive a human crisis. “In the name of Jesus, who came into the world to heal the wounds of humanity, the Church feels called to respond to evil with good by promoting an integral human development,” says Pope Francis.

And on this feast of St. Francis, the words from Pope Francis’s recent encyclical *Laudate Sí* seem an apt way to conclude these thoughts: “Everything is connected... Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters... woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother rivers, and mother earth.” (¶ 91-2)

Fraternally,

Kevin J. Mullen, O.F.M.
Provincial Minister