

## PILGRIMAGE REFLECTION

In the reading from the Book of Ezekiel we heard God say that he himself will search for his sheep. He will deliver them from every place where they were scattered and he himself will pasture the sheep. He himself will give them rest.

Our current shepherd, Pope Francis, gave a powerful homily in July on which I continually reflect. This homily was given at Lampedusa, an island off of Sicily when African refugees attempting to reach the island died at sea. The pope said that many of us have lost our bearings and when we do that, "the other is no longer our sister or brother to be loved, but simply someone who disturbs my life and my comfort." Is this what has happened in our country. Have we lost our bearings and we no longer see our immigrants as our sisters and brothers to be loved, but someone who disturbs my life.

The Pope went on to say that today in our world no one feels responsible; we have lost a sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters. The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people. He asked if anyone has wept because of the immigration situation. The pope says we are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion. We know this is true, and this is why we are here today. We know how to weep, we want to keep our bearings and stand up for our sisters and brothers with love.

Our current immigration system is dehumanizing. It imprisons our brothers and sisters, it strips them of their dignity, they are treated as less than human. When one of us is imprisoned, all of us are imprisoned. We need to cry with our voice, in God's name – LET MY PEOPLE GO! I see it with my eyes in McHenry County jail every week in the men and women in the orange jump suits, I see it at Broadview on Friday in those who are shackled hands and feet and ripped from their families. In another talk the Pope gave on the issue he stole my line. He said that immigrants are not pawns on a global chessboard. He experiences what I do every time I see men and women moved from jail to jail and finally out of the country. And in my voice in God's name I say LET MY PEOPLE GO.

There are so many brothers and sisters living in fear in the shadows. So many brave young men and women who are willing to come out of the shadows. When you look into the eyes of someone who lives in fear or who has had their basic

human rights stolen, their dignity stripped away, treated like an object, how can you turn your back? We are people of faith, we are people of hope. Our presence here today speaks of hope for all our sisters and brothers who need our love and support. For me, and I am sure for many of you, the faith of our sisters and brothers give us hope and give us courage. Sometime the system seems to build mountains so difficult to cross. There are many pieces to the immigration system, but ALWAYS ALWAYS we have to remember that in the midst of the laws, the anti-immigrant feelings, there are real people and real families who are being torn apart.

It is evident that suffering exists in our world – we see the suffering Christ every day. We are the hope. We have to respond with a spirit of compassion, justice, courage, to the suffering in our world.

So now, let us work together and walk together – pilgrims on this journey of hope and faith – symbols of the love of God. Let us with God deliver His sheep from where they are scattered, lost, injured, sick. Let us walk together and raise our voices until there is no more fear or pain. May our faith, our hope, and our desire to live compassionately encourage others to be compassionate, until our world is filled with compassionate people, filled with people who have God's compassionate heart pulsing through them. God bless us on this journey.