

The Refugees before The Crib

Christmas Reflection from the Maronite Archbishop of Damascus

Syria, at this Christmas time, resembles very much, the crib: an open crib, with no doors, cold, deprived and extremely poor.

The Child Jesus doesn't lack companions yet in Syria thousands of children who lost their homes are living under tents as poor as Bethlehem's crib.

Jesus is not alone in his extreme poverty. Syrian children abandoned and scarred by scenes of violence want to be in the place of Jesus who has parents that surround him and cherish him.

This taste of bitterness is very visible in the eyes of these Syrian children, their tears and their silence.

Some of them envy the Divine Child because he found a manger to be born in and to be sheltered, while some unlucky Syrian children are born under the bombs or on the Exodus way.

In her difficulties, Mary is not alone either; ill-fated mothers, less lucky, are living in extreme poverty and handle family responsibilities alone without husbands.

The insecurity (precariousness) of Bethlehem's crib brings a consolation to these mothers crushed by intractable problems and despair.

The reassuring presence of Joseph at the side of the Holy Family is source of jealousy for thousands of families deprived of a father, deprivation which breeds fear, anguish and insecurity. Our unemployed envy Joseph the carpenter, who saves his family from being in need.

The Shepherds and their flocks, close by the manger, speak a lot to the many Syrian farmers who lost 70% of their livestock in this war.

The nomadic life on this biblical earth that dates back to Abraham

and even further back, brutally disappears with its ancient customs of hospitality and its traditional culture.

The dogs of the Christmas shepherds have compassion for the fate of the domestic animals in Syria scarred by the deadly violence; roaming amongst the ruins and feeding themselves with corpses.

The infernal sound of war suffocates the “Gloria” of the Angels. This symphony for peace gives way to hatred, division and cruel atrocities.

May the three Magi bring to Syria’s crib, the most precious Christmas gifts: Peace, Forgiveness and Reconciliation, so that the CHRISTMAS STAR might shine again in our dark nights.

Let us pray to the Divine Child

Lord, graciously hear us.

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