

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Some people have a knack for getting right to the point. Don't you love folks like that—who get right to the point.

On the second day of my recent Retreat, I encountered such a person. I know him only as Father Bill, a member of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, who staff St. Joseph's Retreat House in Milton, Massachusetts. He apparently served many years in Brazil.

To get to the point, Father Bill opened his homily that day, the Feast of St. Martin of Tours, with the words, "You don't want to go to hell. Do you? No, no one wants to go to hell. We're here today because we don't want to go to hell." His homily then meandered, for about 20 minutes, all over the place and I lost him somewhere between Brazil and Minnesota where he was raised on a farm.

He closed by telling us that one morning at 4:00 A.M. he told his Dad that he didn't want to go out to milk the cows. His father responded, "What! You have to milk the cows. The cows have to be milked. He said, after thinking about it for a moment, he figured he had to go because, "Well, the cows just had to be milked. You have to milk the cows."

I'm still not sure what his point was, but these are the two sound-bites, if you will, that I took from that homily. "You don't want to go to hell" and "The cows have to be milked".

In similar fashion, Jesus gets right to the point.

If you don't feed the hungry, you're going to hell;

If you don't give a drink to someone who is thirsty, you're going to hell;

If you don't welcome strangers, you're going to hell;

If you don't clothe the naked, you're going to hell;

If you don't take care of those who are ill, you're going to hell;

If you don't visit those in prison, you're going to hell.

Can it be any plainer than that? So, now we all know what we have to do, if we don't want to go to hell. So, I repeat Father Bill's question to you, "You don't want to go to hell, do you?"

Now, I'm going to ask you another question that I would like you to ponder—Do you have all that you need? Now, understand, I'm not asking you if you have all that you want; I'm asking you, "Do you have all that you need?" And by that I don't mean do you have all that you need so that you can retire in luxury in Boca Raton or on the French Riviera. I mean do you have all that you need to meet the basic necessities of life for you and your family.

If you answer in the affirmative, then you have to share what you have with those who have less. That's as much a responsibility for those who want to enter the Kingdom of God as the farmer having to milk the cows.

So, keep that in mind. You have to milk the cows. The cows have to be milked. If you don't share what you have with those who have less, you're going to go to hell. You don't want to go to hell, do you?