

# Give all that we have to others

So what do cats and Christmas have in common? Perhaps more than we first think.

During Advent, I accompanied some animal rights folks as they brought food to a colony of feral cats.

Feral cats are quite different from our domesticated cats. My little cat, Leia, used to purr and cuddle whenever I visited her. My little cat, Botters Botticelli Breighner, used to do somersaults of joy whenever I visited.

Not so with feral cats. Feral cats are fearful. They run when the stranger approaches, much like the sheep in the parable of Jesus. The “feel good” experience does not come from the cats, but from within, knowing that you have helped some of God’s creatures live another day. As a rabbi once said; “The reward of the good deed is the good deed.”

This group of animal lovers had also built small shelters for the cats, lined with straw, to protect them, somewhat, from the winter elements of snow and cold.

And that was when I made the connection. Animals. Straw. Suddenly, there were reminders of a cave in Bethlehem. Were not Mary and Joseph and a baby in the manger like feral cats? They were unimportant in the eyes of most people. They were just a poor family, easy to ignore. They didn’t matter.

In the person of Jesus we see God, not clinging to divinity, but emptying himself to become the least among us. And I suspect some folks did respond. I’m sure some women would have helped another woman with a baby. Some may have brought food and shared a blanket for warmth.

The other side of that image is to see ourselves as feral cats. Who could be more lost than the human race today? Aren’t we all burdened with too much fear? We are bombarded by stories of wars and terror and governments collapsing and whole economies in trouble. And even the “well off” among us are still caught in the throes of materialism and addictions and fears of losing what they have.

And, yet, for all that we are not, our God still comes to us. Our God comes to feed us with himself in the sacraments. Our God comes to take away our sins and fears in baptism and reconciliation and anointing. Our God comes to us every day, speaking words of hope and healing and comfort in the words of Scripture and in the voices of caring people. And, amazingly, our God comes not just to us, but through us. Our God takes on our flesh and blood and is born in us when we dare to love - to love everyone: the greatest as well as the least. We love others as they are, and ourselves as we are, because that is first how God has loved us.

So, in this mystical season of giving and receiving, let us be the feral cats, thanking God for our very existence - for giving us all that we have and all that we are. And let us be the presence of God, giving all that we have and all that we are to others!