



At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

Introductory Prayer: Lord God, I believe you are present here with me as I begin this moment of prayer. I hope in you. I know that you will always take care of me. I want this time with you to be a sign of my love for you. I seek only to please you, without desiring any spiritual consolation for myself.

Petition: Heart of Christ, make my heart more like yours!

1. Angelic Occupations: Raphael's famous painting of Mary known as the "Sistine Virgin" has a remarkable detail that immediately catches the observer's eye; Beneath the Blessed Virgin, two little cherubs are in a unique pose. They look a little bored with all the attention that Pope St. Sixtus and St. Barbara are paying to the Madonna and Child: They look as if they can't wait to go out and play once all the fuss is over. Obviously, Raphael's sense of humor doesn't do the angelic nature justice. Supremely intelligent, spiritual creatures, angels "always look upon the face the heavenly Father." Their task?

To watch over and protect us. Doesn't that show us how much God loves each one of us individually? Doesn't that tell us of the value of a single soul?

2. The Shepherd's Commitment: The Lord lifts a veil from the invisible world of the angels so that we better understand how much God loves us; now he give us the precious image of the shepherd going in pursuit of the lost sheep. The shepherd braves raw exposure to the elements and danger from wild animals in his relentless effort to find the one sheep who has wandered off. Christ is committed to keeping the flock together. Are we as committed to bringing back the lost sheep?

3. No One Left Behind: Americans love the rugged individualist, the one who lifts himself up by dint of his own focus and effort. There's virtue there, to be sure, but Catholics need a broader vision. Besides lost sheep, there are weak, marginalized and sick ones. If we have the heart of Christ, no one can be left behind. Every time we reach out in sacrificial love, we are making Christ present in the world. We are called to be his ambassadors!

Conversation with Christ: Lord Jesus, your love gives us hope. You have given us angels to watch over us, and you yourself are constantly bringing back the lost sheep. Give us hearts like your own, hearts filled with Christian charity!

Resolution: I will reach out to someone who is sick or has drifted away from the Church.