



A Christian can stay on the right path to Heaven, and grow in love for God and his neighbor, only by keeping close to Christ and his love, Pope Francis said Sunday.

“When one moves away from Jesus and his love, one loses oneself and existence turns into disappointment and dissatisfaction,” the pope said July 22. “With Jesus at [our] side we can proceed with security, we can overcome trials, we progress in love for God and for our neighbor.”

“To find the right orientation of life,” everyone needs the truth – which is Christ – to guide and enlighten their path, he continued.

Speaking before the Angelus, Francis reflected on the day’s Gospel reading from Mark, which tells of Jesus’ pity on the crowd of people, who “were like sheep without a shepherd.” In this passage, Jesus is “the realization of God’s concern and care for his people,” he said.

Jesus is moved with compassion for the people in need of guidance, but he does not perform a miracle, the pope noted. Instead, he teaches them. “Here is the first bread that the Messiah offers to the hungry and lost crowd: the bread of the Word.”

Pointing to how Jesus and his disciples had been searching for a place to rest, but the crowd had followed them, Francis said, the same thing can happen to today. “Sometimes we fail to realize our projects, because an unexpected emergency occurs

that messes up our programs and requires flexibility and availability to the needs of others.”

He said when this happens, “we are called to imitate Christ.” As it shows in the Gospel, Jesus did not ignore the people. He had compassion on them, came down to them, and “began to teach them many things,” something Christians can learn from.

“The gaze of Jesus is not a neutral or, worse, cold and detached look, because Jesus always looks with the eyes of the heart,” the pope said. Jesus’ heart “is so tender and full of compassion, that he knows how to grasp the even more hidden needs of people.”

Jesus’ compassion on the people is not “an emotional reaction of unease,” it is much more, he continued: “it is the attitude and predisposition of God towards man and his history.”

In this example of Jesus, Christians find a model of love and service toward others, he said.

After the Angelus, Pope Francis added a note about recent reports of the shipwrecking of boats filled with migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. “I express my sorrow in the face of these tragedies and assure my memory and my prayer for the missing people and their families,” he said.

He also made an appeal to the international community to act promptly to prevent the reoccurrence of such tragedies and to guarantee safety and respect for the rights and dignity of all people.