

From the Chaplaincy



THE SHEPHERD OF CALVARY

By Fr. Francis Ongkingco

“Father! Father!” Roeh’s son Mehamer, barged into his father’s cold and dank room.

Roeh, blind and bedridden for many years, was clearly irritated. He was just about to finally catch sleep and Mehamer stole it from him.

“I have something for you, Father!” Mehamer said.

“Could it not wait for later!!!!?” Roeh tried to control his anger.

“Feel this, Father!” Mehamer placed something on his hands.

“This should warm you during winter! It just needs a little washing to remove some stains.” Mehamer did not say that they were blood stains.

Roeh, caressed the cloth and realized it was wool, finely woven and very expensive. *“Where did you get this?”* He continued stroking the cloth.

"I won it, Father!" Mehamer proudly said.

"Gambling again!!!" Roeh angrily burst out.

Roeh had prayed for Mehamer to quit gambling. Neither Mehamer's becoming a hired soldier for the Roman army helped to remove this vice.

"It's only a game!" Mehamer replied.

"It has brought nothing but trouble!!!"

"But not bad luck, like your blindness or even Mother's strange illness!" Mehamer mockingly replied.

"There is no such thing as luck...!!!" Roeh corrected him.

"If you could only see this garment, Father. I've never seen something so pure and smooth!"

"Who owned this anyway?" Roeh asked.

"Just a condemned fool who claimed he was God's son. The other soldiers badly wanted to buy what I won, but I refused because I thought of you."

Roeh continued to stroke the fabric. Suddenly, he felt strangely familiar with the material and smelled it. Roeh started to cry.

"Father, what is wrong?" Mehamer asked.

"You must return this garment!" his father said adamantly.

"But I rightfully won it!!!"

"This wool is sacred!"

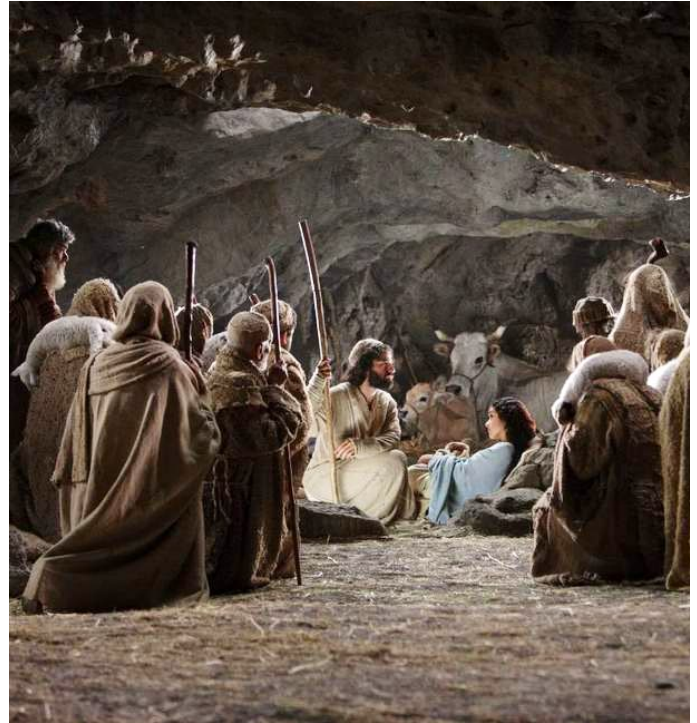
"You're delirious, Father!!!"

"It was a night of the greatest Light, my son! You were not there because you were gambling in the city. Do you remember?"

Mehamer tried denying it but only nodded in agreement.

"When the angel appeared, we searched for you,

but you were nowhere! So, we left and beheld the Child of God!"



"Nonsense, Father. After you and your companions started spreading your silly stories, you were all stricken by misfortunes!"

"But the sheep..." Roeh tried continuing.

"Enough...!! Then Mother got sick and died. And you and many of the shepherds became blind."

"...we all embraced these sacrifices for the Child!"

"It's a lie that cannot bring Mother back nor your sight! And I have cared for you all these years and you have said nothing but to criticize my gambling," Mehamer retorted.

"I'm am deeply sorry, my son," Roeh said. ***"You don't have to believe me, but that night, the angel and the Child truly changed us, even though it was followed by sad events."***

"Excuses..." Mehamer turned his back on Roeh.

"Son, I may die anytime and I believe it is not by chance that you acquired this garment."

“Then for what, Father!!!?”

“That I may hold for one more time, the wool that had been blessed that night!”

“Blessed!!!? Hah! You are really crazy, Father!”

“No, my son! After the angel left us we noticed that the sheep’s wool changed. It became so white and had a gentle fragrance.”

“...scent?” Mehamer smelled the garment. A scent gently overpowered him with silence.

“What is it, Mehamer?” Roeh sensed something had happened.

“I did not notice the scent before....”

“We gathered all the wool and gave it as a gift to the Mother of the Child-God!”

“But he was just crucified! How could a God die!!!?” Mehamer cried out.

“I beg you, return the garment. Go! Leave it to wherever they may have laid him,” Roeh pleaded with tears.

“I will, father,” he stammered as he wrestled with the confusion overwhelming him.

The following day, he folded the garment and headed for the condemned man’s tomb. Dawn had not yet broken and the guards were fast asleep.

Fearing that the guards may steal the garment if he left it, he decided to hide it among the branches of a nearby tree. As he turned to leave, a bright light exploded behind him. But it was still too early for dawn? The ground shook and the soldiers awoke in fear and fled from the tomb. Mehamer



courageously stood up and approached the bright light coming from the tomb’s opening. There he saw two angels kneeling at the entrance. Then he heard a voice but could not see who spoke.

“Mehamer, I have been waiting for you all these years!” The voice said. *“Can you shepherd my flock?”* The voice continued.

“If my unworthiness pleases thee, Lord, I am ready to do as you wish,” Mehamer knelt and wept.



“If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?”