

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



“The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them, and they know me” (John 10:27).

The Easter image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is one that so many of us easily relate to. I think the relatability comes from the tender feeling which the image presents. The shepherd is the guide and protector of the sheep. Sheep are not the smartest animals. They need the assistance of the shepherd to know where and when to graze. They need the shepherd to guard and defend them from predators. While humans are far more intelligent than sheep, we still in need of the assistance of a shepherd to guide us on life's journey. Our Shepherd is Christ Jesus, our Risen Lord.

Life is a blessing. It is filled with the presences of those we love and whom love us. Life is blessed with employment that calls upon our talents and gifts in which we feel purposeful and appreciated. Life is full of the moments of peaceful rest and encounters and experiences which lift our souls to new heights of ecstasy and comprehension that we are part of something greater than our finite lives. Likewise, life is also full of moments of pain, betrayal, sorrow, illness and loneliness. Such uncomfortable and tough moments easily lead us to ask “why?” to which no

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clear answer can be found. In all of life's experiences, the good and the tough, we search for someone, some people, who can support, guide, challenge, comfort, or celebrate with us the breadth of our life experience. As Catholic Christians, we implore the loving assistance of the Good Shepherd.

In the tenth chapter of the St. John's Gospel, Jesus teaches us that He is the Good Shepherd. He is the One to unite, guard and guide the flock of the Father.

His words instruct the flock in what is necessary for life. His actions bring the flock deeply into the mystery of the Father's loving mercy. In His death and resurrection, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, protects and defends the flock in His care. The Good Shepherd provides for the flock all that is necessary to live a full and abundant life, while navigating the tough moments with hope. Jesus does all of this simply because He is in love with the flock.



We are the desire of God's love. All of the Father's love is poured out on us and all of creation. This is the blessing of life. The work of the Good Shepherd is to facilitate our movement into the mystery of the Father's love. Responding to God's love should be easy for us, as the desire for God lies deep within the fabric of our being. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches this in article 27: "the desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases

loses faith with humanity. This is the Good News that Jesus proclaimed. The faithful reading and praying of scripture attunes us to the word that God continually speaks to the human heart, love. Lectio Divina, the rosary, and other prayer forms likewise attunes our hearts to the voice of the Lord. Lastly, creating moments of silence, turning off the noise around us, invites us to focus on the Lord's voice who speaks the word that we need for the present moment in our lives. Cultivating the frequent use of Scripture, prayer methods and silence

Questions for Prayer and Reflection:

1. **Prayerfully Read John 10:1-18. What "word" is the Lord speaking to me, at this moment in my life? What meaning might this "word" have in my life at present?**
2. **What is the Good Shepherd asking of me? What does this feel like? Am I willing to respond? Why?**

to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for..." Yet, even with the desire of God written on our hearts, it can be difficult to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. So many voices clamor for our attention. An excessive level of noise fills our world. Hearing and listening to the voice of the Good Shepherd can be difficult even as we desire to do so. Learning to discern the voice of the Lord is the work of the flock.

invites the Good Shepherd to speak His word to us. These tools cultivate within us the ability to hear and to respond to Jesus, our Risen Good Shepherd.



Discernment is not a task undertaken just by persons deciding to enter the consecrated life or the priesthood. Discernment should be an on-going, daily part of our prayer. Discernment is equipping ourselves as believers, as the flock of Jesus, to hear, recognize, listen and wholeheartedly respond to the Divine Voice. The tools of this process of equipping ourselves are the Scriptures; favorite prayer methods and silence.

Sacred Scripture is God's word to us. Within the sacred pages are found the love-story between God and humanity. No matter the level of faithfulness that humanity shows in their covenant with God, God remains ever faithful to humanity, to us. Even in the portions of scripture where God is angry or disappointed with humanity, God never

Vocation Directors

Fr Donald Siple, OSM
donaldsiple@servitesusa.org

Mr Eddie Murphy
vocations@servitesusa.org

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