

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



In today's readings:

Jesus: the name that saves. Acts 4:8-12
One day we will see God. 1 John 3:1-2
I am the Good Shepherd. John 10:11-18

Next week:

Jesus, the true vine
Acts 9:26-31; 1 John 3:18-24;
John 15:1-8

In a nutshell

As both shepherd and paschal lamb, Jesus shows his care for God's people. His is a radical leadership placing the wellbeing of his people before his very own, even laying down his life for them. On this 'Prayer for Vocations' Sunday, it is fitting to reflect on the ways we are called to 'shepherd' others in the spirit of the risen Christ.



Being there

6.45 am Tuesday. Outside a church stand six people, all anxiously looking down the footpath as if waiting for a bus. They are parishioners who have arrived for 7am Mass. They have never known the church to still be shut at this hour of the morning. 'Here comes Father!' says one. Relief and smiles as the priest comes hurrying down the footpath.

The incident got me thinking. Have you ever known a priest *not* to turn up to a Mass he was scheduled to celebrate? If you do, I'll bet it was a rare event and his absence was due to extraordinary circumstances. In my lifetime I have only ever known this to have happened once. Once, in the thousands of Masses I have been to - now that's an amazing trackrecord.

Consider the number of Masses that are celebrated everyday in parishes throughout this country. Consider too that priests, like all human beings, have days when they feel tired, sick, depressed, fed-up, overworked, lonely or disappointed.

How tempting it must be... just this once... to hit the snooze button rather than rise at 6.00 with a head cold to say Mass for a handful of people. The fact that absenteeism among Mass celebrants is virtually unheard of I find quite extraordinary. As extraordinary perhaps as the taken-for-granted fidelity of a parent providing a meal for the family each day. No fanfare, no thanks, you just do it. It's part of the deal. It's what the love of the Good Shepherd is all about.

I have pondered this simple observation in recent months, perhaps because I put great value on fidelity, and this is one clear example. There are, of course, countless others.

Today's Church faces difficult issues. The climate is at times opinionated and contentious. As we go forward with Jesus, let's never lose sight of our goodness as a Catholic people, so often embodied in unsung acts of fidelity. (TP)

Ways we care

In the park today I watched a social worker walking along with a young woman who was obviously psychologically disturbed.

The young woman's looks and behaviour were disconcerting to say the least. I don't like using it, but 'ugly' is the word that comes to mind. People nearby were obviously keeping their distance.

By contrast, the social worker displayed a fearless gentleness and patience. He showed not a glimmer of distaste or frustration. He spoke to her in soft, respectful tones, held her hand when he needed to and coaxed her along the walking path.

In their witness I saw something holy: evidence that God that doesn't run away from our darkness, but lovingly enters and heals it. (Meg)



I know my own

I am sitting with a young mum who has just put her 20 month old son to bed. Indignant shouts come from the boy's room as he adjusts to this bedtime ritual. 'He's okay,' says his mum, unconcerned. A few minutes later she gets up and heads for the child's room. What's changed? 'He's thrown his bottle out of the cot,' she replies. How can she know this? The child's noises all sound the same to me! I guess parental love tunes the ear in a special way. (Katy)

Think . Pray

Think of some ways you are 'shepherd to a flock;' e.g., as family member, parishioner, teacher of a class, manager of a staff, captain of a team. In such a role, what does it mean to 'lay down your life'?

Lord, in my own vocation may I know you and follow you more closely.



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

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