

# WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

I am the Good Shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine and mine know Me,  
just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father;  
and I will lay down My life for the sheep.

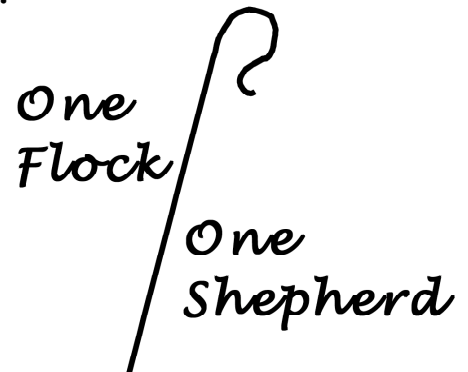
John 10: 11,14

As we celebrate the feast of Christ as our Good Shepherd,  
the Catholic Church throughout the world  
invites us to pray for and honor all Christian vocations.  
We are called to be united as one flock under Jesus,  
our One Shepherd.

By our baptism, we are called, chosen, and sent,  
to carry on the mission of Jesus  
as single or married people, as priests and deacons,  
and as consecrated women and men.

May we be faithful to our call.

Let us pray that young people  
will discern their unique response  
in living out their baptismal commitment.



Let us pause and remember that the Spirit of God is upon us.  
The Spirit of God consecrates us. The Spirit of God rests upon us.  
The Spirit of God bids us to go forth to proclaim God's love, God's joy.  
In the name of God our Father and Creator, Jesus our Brother and Redeemer,  
and the Spirit our Life and Grace-Giver. Amen. Alleluia!

Out of the darkness God has called us,  
Claimed by Christ as God's own people.  
Holy nation, royal priesthood,  
Walking in God's marvelous light.

Let us take the words You give,  
Strong and faithful words to live.  
Words that in our hearts are sown;

Words that bind us as Your own.  
Let us take the Christ You give,  
Broken Body Christ we live.  
Christ is risen from the tomb;  
Christ Who calls us as Your own.

Let us take the love You give,  
That the way of love we live,  
Love to bring Your people home;  
Love to make us all Your own.

Christopher Walker, 1999, OCP Publishers

## **Reflection**

– Father M. Jeffery Bayhi, Diocese of Baton Rouge, LA

As we celebrate this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, we have to realize that Christ calls all the baptized to a life of holiness and grace. By the gift of baptism, we cannot only become part of God's plan of salvation, but heirs to the kingdom. Every one of us exists for a reason and every life as a purpose. To realize that God knows us, knows us by name and longs for our "yes" is part of the gift we receive in baptism. The call is not a job or a career; it is a way of life. Your vocation may be to marriage with a career in law enforcement, medicine or maintenance, but the call to love is from God. So it is with priesthood and the consecrated life: the vocation and the longing for holiness of life come from the Lord Himself. Our ministry may vary, but the call is the state of life that God intends for us.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of our day is to let people know that they are worthy of God's love, time, and concern. In a highly impersonal society in which so many are reduced simply to a number, it is hard to believe that a God, so great and wonderful, would even notice me, let alone have a plan and a purpose for my life. Because we think God is too busy for someone like me, we may not listen for the call, and may even ignore God. To connect the next generation to a God Who loves them is the task we must embark upon. Whether they become priests or religious is up to God. We are in sales; God is in management. Enabling the next generation to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd is what creating a vocation culture is all about.

Our task is to connect people to the Good Shepherd. It is His voice that will call them, His voice that will reassure them, and His voice that will sustain them. In a world filled with so much noise, finding a place of quiet and silence in our homes, families, and schools is what we need to do. Building a vocation culture is not about badgering people into a calling that is not theirs. Building a culture of vocation involves teaching people to pray, listen, and to wait for the voice that they will recognize as that of their true Shepherd. Let us teach our youth this prayer: "Lord, let me know what You want me to do and the person You want me to be."

## **Reflection on Psalm 23** – Msgr. Francis P. Friedl, Archdiocese of Dubuque, IA

It has been said, that scripture is what God wants us to know about God. And so often, we learn what God wants us to know about God through the things of our own ordinary, everyday, natural lives. This idea of sheep and shepherding is an example of that. But not all of us have much experience in these areas, so it is good for us who have “sheepless” lives to learn some things about them.

It’s a lot of work to be a shepherd. To love sheep properly and care for them correctly is DIFFICULT work. First of all, sheep are, shall we say, “small of brain” – they just aren’t very smart. Besides that, and maybe BECAUSE of that, they are fearful, they panic easily – they are jumpy.

And they are the same today as they were in Biblical times, when Psalm 23 was written. Shepherding has changed in some ways, but the sheep remain the same.

In that time, when a shepherd took his sheep to the place he wanted them to sleep at night, he did three important things. (1) He put them in a green, protected pasture. (2) He built a fire for warmth and light and protection. (3) He was sure there was a nearby source of QUIET water.

All of this was done because the shepherd understands his sheep. He knows that when they awake, they are hungry. If they can’t immediately find food, they become very restless and agitated – and then they CAN’T eat – they are too upset. So, if the shepherd puts them to sleep at night with their faces right in the grass — the food — they will have no trouble finding it upon awakening. They will be peaceful and calm and ABLE to eat. And so verses 1-2 of Psalm 23 speak of this very well – The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He leads me to lie down in green [verdant] pastures.

Another thing the shepherd knows about the sheep is that they are very much afraid of moving water. Their vision is poor, they are confused by all the movement they see in the water and they won’t go near it. Verse 2 goes on to say: “beside restful waters he leads me.” Perfect. The sheep will drink from restful water.

And because sheep have such poor vision, and because they are not particularly sure-footed, the shepherd has to carefully choose the right paths on which to walk them. Verse 3 – “he guides me in right paths.”

Shepherds understand their sheep. They know what makes them tick. They do not get annoyed with them for being sheep. They do not reject them when they display the characteristics that sheep display. In fact they find them very appealing. They love their sheep.

And, in the same way, Jesus shepherds us with care and concern, with insight into the nature of the beast, with acute awareness of how we think.

There are times, in all of our lives, when we have the feeling that we need some shepherding – that no one is really concerned about us – that no one cares. In those times, **KNOW** that you can turn to Jesus, Your Good Shepherd. He will not find you annoying, he will not reject you. In fact he will find you wonderfully lovable and appealing. Jesus loves you, just like you are. He will guide you and guard you, protect you and direct you. He is your shepherd. He knows you well. You never get lost in the crowd. He has His eye on you at all times. He knows you are His and that His flock is not complete without you.

The Lord is **YOUR** shepherd – it's true, **YOU** shall not want. But you have a role in this too.

Your role is to get to know the voice of your shepherd. To do this you have to practice. To practice you have to spend time in prayer, quietly listening – deliberately trying to learn the sound of Jesus' voice. How can we possibly come under the loving care of someone unless we are listening for that voice? The voice of Jesus is always available to us, always speaking to us. The question is – do we recognize it when we hear it? Are we listening?

Take some time now to simply sit and listen. Sit still and listen for the voice of your shepherd, Jesus, the Good Shepherd. And this week, **PRACTICE** that. Practice listening for and learning the voice of Jesus in your own life.



Like a shepherd He feeds His flock  
and gathers the lambs in His arms,  
holding them gently close to His heart, leading them home.

I Myself will pasture them,  
For others have led them astray.  
The lost I will rescue and heal their wounds  
And pasture them, giving them rest.

Come unto Me  
If you are heavily burdened,  
And take My yoke upon your shoulders,  
I will give you rest.

Roberet Dufford, 1976, New Dawn Music

## Psalm 118

Alleluia.

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,  
for His mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes.

Alleluia.

I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me  
and have been my Savior.

The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.

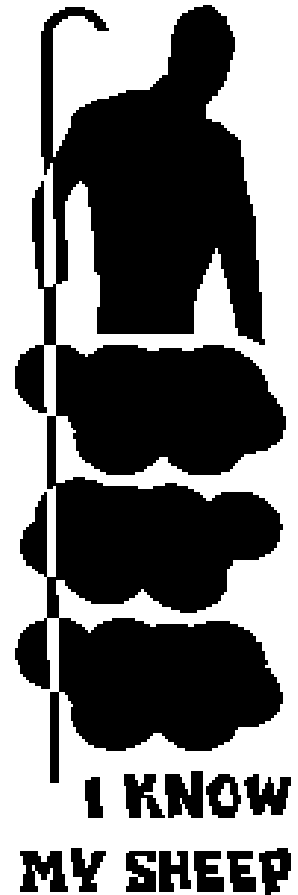
Alleluia.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD;  
we bless You from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me  
and have been my Savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;  
for His kindness endures forever.

Alleluia.



## Reading 1      John 3:1-2

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us  
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us  
is that it did not know Him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like Him,  
for we shall see Him as He is.

## **Intercessions**

Let us offer our prayer to the Good Shepherd Who providently watches over us.

**Leader:** We pray for our Church leaders,  
bless them, O Lord, with wisdom, strength and courage  
to guide Your flock.

**All:** Holy Spirit of God embolden them to lead with creativity  
while being true to faith and tradition.

**Leader:** We pray for the leaders of all nations including our own,  
that they may unite in their efforts  
to establish peace and justice for all peoples

**All:** Spirit of the living God guide them in all their deliberations.

**Leader:** We pray for this community of faith.  
May You, Risen Lord, strengthen and renew us  
as we live out our baptismal commitment.

**All:** May we be Your faithful witnesses to the ends of the earth.

**Leader:** We pray for all those who are discerning a life choice.  
Guide them Lord and lead them to the right vocation for them.

**All:** Help us, Lord, to support them with our prayers  
and words of encouragement.

**Leader:** We pray for married couples, single Christians,  
priests, deacons, brothers and sisters.  
Anointed One, enrich their lives with love and compassion.

**All:** May we continually strive to take on the mind and heart of Jesus.

**Leader:** We pray for all who have died.  
May they enjoy the presence of the Risen Christ.

**All:** May the angels welcome them, the martyrs greet them,  
and the saints escort them to their heavenly home  
where they will enjoy God's presence forever.

### **Let us pray:**

Provident God,  
You bless us with the Gift of Jesus  
Who cares for us as a Good Shepherd.

By our baptism we are anointed  
And sent forth to continue the mission of Jesus.

Guide Your people to prayerfully choose  
A way of life that best serves You with their gifts.

Empower us by Your Holy Spirit to live dedicated lives  
As married and single people, as deacons, priests and religious.  
United with Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we are one with You now and forever.  
Amen.

Let us pray the OUR FATHER  
for our family, friends, and co-workers who are discerning their life choice.

## Blessing

**Leader:** May God our Creator bless us with a generous heart.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May Jesus our Good Shepherd protect and guide us  
on the path of Christian service.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May God the Holy Spirit, our Life-Giver,  
inspire us to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

**All:** Amen.



The God Who sends us forth united in our prayer,  
Has strengthened us and tended us with Shepherd's care.  
God's Jesus makes us bold, His body is our bread,  
His wine of life is fullness for the road ahead.

The road ahead is filled with travelers without end:  
The wayward and the wanderer, the migrant friend.  
And we are Jesus' flesh, His welcome and His home.  
We go from here to love and serve, to tend God's own.

So let us bless our God, the Sender and the One,  
And let us bless the Servant Jesus Christ the Son.  
The Spirit let us thank, Whose love is bright indeed,  
Who lights a gentle pathway for a world in need.

The God Who Sends Us Forth, John Foley, S.J., 1993, GIA Publications



Saint John Baptist de La Salle  
and all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,  
may we continually be open to the Spirit of God working in our life.

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!