

GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY 2023 - A WAY TO PRAY EACH EVENING

Fourth Sunday of Easter – 30 April 2023



Good Shepherd Sunday 2023: A way to pray each evening

INTRODUCTION

On Thursday and Friday this week, Bishop Tim Norton gathered the clergy of Brisbane at the Seminary for a conference on Interculturality.

We could choose the Thursday session or the Friday session.

There are videos available from Catholic Religious Australia on interculturality.

<https://www.catholicreligious.org.au/interculturality>

Today we are invited to remember the forthcoming Summit for Brisbane Archdiocese in May. I'll speak about it after Communion.

We pray for our sisters and brothers in Blackall / Tambo and in South Sudan.

FOUR PARTS TO THE HOMILY

We have *four* parts to the homily.

1. Today is both *Good Shepherd Sunday and Vocations Sunday*
2. *Invitation of Pope Francis to evening prayer*
3. *Evening Prayer with Jesus the Good Shepherd*
4. *The fruit of this prayer with God*

1. [Good Shepherd Sunday and Vocations Sunday](#)

We are invited continually by Jesus to know his voice and to follow him.

On this Sunday we pray for vocations – lay, religious and clergy.

We pray for more vocations, but also for

- integrity, openness, accountability and service in living those vocations
- vocations that are centred on a loving relationship with Jesus.
- an openness to where the Holy Spirit leads us.

Jesus is the gate, and Jesus is the good shepherd.

That leaves the rest of us to decide what part we are in this Gospel passage.

We do not want to be the thief and bandit who steal and kill and destroy.

We do not want to be the stranger who causes the sheep to run away.

We want to be the sheep, with Jesus as our Shepherd and Gate.

GOSPEL OF JOHN 10:1-10

Jesus is the gate and he keeps us safe inside the sheepfold. Jesus says,

“anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice”

Jesus knows us and we know him. We trust Jesus.

The Gospel says that the good shepherd:

“calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

Jesus talks about what he wants for us:

“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

In John 10:11 and again John 10:14, Jesus says ***“I am the good shepherd.”***

How can we be like Jesus the Good Shepherd?

How do we live our lives with Jesus as our Good Shepherd?

How do we pray to Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

Later in John 14:6 Jesus says:

“I am the way and the truth and the life.”

Let us take some time this week and pray humbly before Jesus the Good Shepherd.

2. Invitation of Pope Francis to evening prayer

We are invited to spend time this evening with Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Pope Francis invited us at the [Regina Caeli last Sunday](#),

to reread our daily life with Jesus.

He invited us to drop our defences and to listen to Jesus each evening.

He invited us to tell Jesus everything – to share our inner selves.

Let us listen to his words.

“But, what happened today within me? That is the question.

It is a matter of rereading the day with Jesus, rereading my day: opening the heart to him, bringing to him people, choices, fears, falls and hopes, all the things that happened; to learn gradually to look at things with different eyes, with his eyes and not just our own.”

Jesus truly wants us to share with him. He wants to accompany us.

“The Lord is happy whenever we open ourselves to him; only in this way can he take us by the hand, accompany us and make our hearts burn again.”

Jesus calls us to step forward.
Through his love for us, he wants to make a difference in our lives.

*“Before Christ’s love, even that which seems
wearisome and unsuccessful can appear under another light:
a difficult cross to embrace,
the decision to forgive an offence,
a missed opportunity for redress,
the toil of work,
the sincerity that comes at a price,
and the trials of family life can appear to us in a new light,
the light of the Crucified and Risen,
who knows how to turn every fall into a step forward.”*

Let us begin this evening by asking how our day has been.

*“We can begin today,
to dedicate this evening a moment of prayer
during which we ask ourselves: how was my day?
What were its joys, what were its sorrows,
what were its mundanities, what happened?
What were the pearls of the day,
possibly hidden, to be thankful for?
Was there a little love in what I did?
And what are the falls, the sadness,
the doubts and fears to bring to Jesus
so that He can open new ways to me,
to lift me up and encourage me?”*

[3. Evening Prayer with Jesus the Good Shepherd](#)

There are several suggested steps in opening our hearts to Jesus in evening prayer.

We aim to reread today in front of Jesus.

We allow about 15 minutes in evening prayer to pray this way.

We take the outline from the **daily awareness examen**, provided by the Australian Jesuits.
It has five steps – **Help, Thanks, Review, Response, Resolve**.

They are printed in our newsletter today.

“In conversation with God

Help

I ask the Spirit for help to perceive my day with God’s eyes.

Thanks

I give thanks for the gifts, benefits and blessings of my day.

Review

I review my day, becoming aware of my feelings.

Response

I notice what needs further loving attention

Resolve

With hope and love I focus my desires for others and for myself for the morrow."

A daily awareness examen, also known as an examen of consciousness is different from an examination of conscience. They complement each other. We use an examination of conscience, for example, to help us prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation. We name our sins and reliance on God and our need for forgiveness.

The daily awareness examen is a shared conversation between God and ourselves. It can be between God and an adult, or between God and a teenager, or between God and a child.

There are many writers who have written about the examen. I'll add some insights on three of the steps below in italics from Gerard W. Hughes SJ in his book **God of Surprises**, Darton Longman & Todd, London 1985, pages 78-79. And I quote after this, from his many years as a spiritual director, on what a difference this time of prayer enables.

"In conversation with God

Help

I ask the Spirit for help to perceive my day with God's eyes.

Thanks

I give thanks for the gifts, benefits and blessings of my day.

"... let your mind drift over the day, refraining from any self-judgement, whether of approval or disapproval, to and relishing only those moments of the day for which you are grateful... an exercise in 'the praise, reverence and service of God'. Having remembered the events for which you are grateful, thank and praise God for them."

Review

I review my day, becoming aware of my feelings.

"... recall your inner moods and feelings, noting, if you can, what occasioned them, but again refraining from any self-judgement. Be with Christ as you look at these moods and beg him to show you the attitudes that underlie them... just relive, in Christ's presence, the events that gave rise to them..."

*Sometimes, this can be very painful,
for if we look at the scene and refrain from judging,
the facts can begin to judge us
and we can begin to see with clarity our own refusal
to understand, listen, be compassionate,
and treat the other person, or persons, with love."*

Response

I notice what needs further loving attention

*"Thank him for the times we have 'let his glory through'
and beg his forgiveness for the times we have refused him entry...
He knows our weakness far better than we do.'*

Resolve

With hope and love I focus my desires for others and for myself for the morrow."

4. The fruit of this prayer with God

Some tell me that they watch TV at night to relax and so don't pray.

What difference could an evening conversation with God make?

Gerard Hughes explained the difference when we do this regularly.

*"We shall find that he is making us more able to love,
to experience a joy welling up within us, often unexpectedly.
We shall become less agitated and more peaceful,
less hurried and more content to wait,
less suspicious and more ready to trust,
able to find interest and delight in people who used to make us bristle,
less fearful of what others may think of us and more free to be ourselves,
kinder to others, and ourselves and less likely to fly off the handle."*

What a difference *Jesus, the Good Shepherd* makes in our lives.

May we invite Jesus to shepherd us this evening.

May he take us by the hand.

Let us pray.

Father Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/043023.cfm>