

'JESUS, THE GATE FOR THE SHEEP' - HOMILY – 7 MAY 2017 – 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER

In reflecting on Jesus this Good Shepherd Sunday,
We traditionally ponder our living relationship with Jesus and our trust in Him.
We know his voice and we follow him.

VOCATIONS SUNDAY

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.
Not centred on prestige, abuse of power, fame, image or ego.
We pray that we follow Jesus as disciples, that we share our gifts and talents.
We pray that we admit our failings, our sins, our crimes.
We pray that we are open to where the Holy Spirit leads us.

MASS AT ST. JOHN FISHER COLLEGE

On Friday, at Mass, at St John Fisher College, the same Gospel text was read.
One of the girls volunteered to be the gate, and another the shepherd.
That left the rest of us to decide what part we were in this passage.
We did not want to be the thief and bandit who steal and kill and destroy.
We did not want to be the stranger who causes the sheep to run away.
We wanted to be the sheep, with Jesus as our Shepherd and Gate.
We paused silently to identify who are the shepherds in our lives.
And we prayed silently for them and thanked God for them.

Let us slowly hear today's Gospel – John 10:1-10

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit.

² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

⁵ They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

⁸ All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.

⁹ I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

We know that Jesus says that he is the Good Shepherd.

In John 10:11 he says ***"ego eimi ho poimen ho kalos" "I am the shepherd, the good one."***

And what does the Good Shepherd do?

Verse 10:11 continues:

“ho poimen ho kalos ten psuchen autou tithesin huper ton probaton”

“the shepherd the good one the life of him lays down for the sheep” - literal translation

“the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” - NRSV English translation

And this is stressed again in John 10:14,

“Ego eimi ho poimen ho kalos”.

“I am the shepherd, the good one.”

RECOGNISING THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN OUR LIVES

How do we **SEE** Jesus, as the Good Shepherd in our lives?

How do we **LIVE** our lives with Jesus as the Good Shepherd?

How do we **PRAY** to Jesus as the Good Shepherd?

How do we **RESPECT OTHERS** and live justly?

How do we **RESPECT THE EARTH** as our common home?

How we **WORK ETHICALLY** in our jobs and careers?

Our prayer, our relationships, our work, our lifestyles, our interests, our communities –

HOW DO THEY RELATE GENUINELY TO JESUS AS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD?

We respond to his voice and follow.

Not mindlessly.

We follow in love, committed to using our gifts and talents for God and our neighbour.

JESUS IS THE GATE, THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE

Today’s passage also says that Jesus is the gate.

And that Jesus came that we may have life.

And have it abundantly.

Jesus is the gate through which we pass.

Later in John 14:6 this image is widened as Jesus says:

“Ego eimi he hodos kai he aletheia kai he zoe”

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

(If you wish to pronounce the Greek texts above,

Ego, ton, probaton have a long O;

Aletheia has a long first E,

He, Zoe and *Poimen, ten* and *psuchen* have a long E).

As Jesus is the gate, the way, the truth, the life,

We expect to live with **ethical integrity**, respecting our **vocations** in life.

We advocate in society and within the church for ethical statements.

Child Safety, Professional Standards, Integrity Statements,

Specific ethical beliefs and standards in all professions and groups of interest.

Ethical financial outlines and procedures.

Ethical standards in research, health, education, media, industry, agricultural practices.

Government procedures.

Community support for families.

And the list goes on...

HOW DO OUR ETHICAL BELIEFS RESPECT JESUS AS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD?

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, offers us life abundantly.
Let us pray now to Jesus as Good Shepherd. (pause)

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

At this time the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is meeting. During the conference, our leading Catholic agencies meet with their Bishops' Councils and Commissions, and some issues are discussed by the entire Conference. The joint voice of Catholic Religious Australia and the Catholic Bishops is expressed on some issues.

Let us pray as important issues are discussed this month.

Some of the issues discussed may include:

- school and tertiary education,
- disability support,
- ageing,
- a large variety of counselling services, including relationships, marital preparation, grief, loss, and identity,
- suicide and self-harm prevention,
- provision of out-of-school-hours care, vacation care, day care,

- implementation of actions raised at the Royal Commission including sincere apology for the sins and crimes committed and covered up, listening to survivors and their families and friends, ways of preventing church abuse, education, formation, transparency, accountability, safety officers, policies, compensation, support groups, spirituality of survival, grieving,

- maintenance and planning of present and future hospitals and extensions,
- nursing homes,
- home nursing services, palliative care,
- whole life support from conception to death (including respect for human life instead of abortion, human cloning, euthanasia, capital punishment)
- vulnerable adult protection, support and policies
- the homeless
- Biblical and theological studies and courses,
- academic research in science and the social sciences,
- Indigenous requests and insights, acknowledgements, Reconciliation Action Plans,
- Initiatives in promoting the vital roles of women in leadership,
- ethical issues in business, medical ethics, governance,
- doctrinal education,
- planning a national Plenary Council in 2020.
- liturgy and sacrament, including baptisms, prayers for anniversaries of baptism, blessing ceremonies,
RCIC, RCIA, Confirmation, Penance, First Communion,
Marriage, Anointing of the Sick, Pastoral liturgies and prayers for Sick and the Dying,
Ordination (Deacons, Priests, Bishops),

Commissioning of Lay Leaders, Parish Pastoral Councils and Lay Ministries,
Funerals,

- seminary formation,
- spirituality formation inclusive of Catholic traditions, formation of retreat teams, of spiritual directors, of vocational spirituality, of the insights of Eastern Catholic traditions, of the many cultures from which we come, as the present church in Australia,
- youth outreach, formation and ministry,
- pastoral life and church ministry,
- formation of parish pastoral councils, parish teams, liturgy teams, finance councils
- pastoral research,
- parish formation of lay leaders,
- support of family in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.
- marriage education services and programmes,
- ecumenical relationships across the Christian traditions,
- interfaith initiatives,
- dialogue with atheism
- university research across many church institutions
- option for the poor,
- child protection and support,
- scholarships,
- music ministry,
- employment relations, church recognition of the rights of workers, just conditions, safe environment
- ongoing support for migrants, language and chaplaincy and pastoral care
- settlement support for refugees,
- advocacy strategies for refugees and asylum seekers,
- apostleship of the seafarers
- chaplaincy teams in prisons, and pastoral support of the families of prisoners,
- chaplaincy in the armed services,
- police chaplaincy,
- overseas development issues,
- church understanding of non-violence
- resources for urgent responses to natural disasters,
- the types of human rights,
- religious freedom, freedom to worship,
- social justice issues and awareness,
- peace initiatives,
- racism awareness, and the promotion that all are fashioned in God's image and likeness,
- environment and development,
- climate change,
- protection of the Great Barrier Reef, our waterways, our land, the air we breathe,
- design of church and agency buildings in keeping with our responsibilities to care for the earth,
- awareness of the issues facing our sisters and brothers in Oceania,
- awareness of the issues facing our brothers and sisters in the world,
- evangelisation challenges,

- current research into an understanding of sexual identity,
- more professional usage of social communication,
- issues raised by individual dioceses,
- issue of sanctuary,
- scientific/faith research and events,
- criteria and process for selection of Bishops,
- pressures faced by people in modern society,
- drug education in our parishes and agencies, e.g. current rate of Ice addition and its damage to people
- acknowledgement of daily service by many baptised Catholics without any recognition,
- human resources support, insurance of personnel and resources,
- anti-terrorism education

There are many other important issues and the list continues...

WE ASK OURSELVES, HOW DO WE SEE JESUS AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN THESE ISSUES?

Each May, the Australian Catholic Church reflects on many issues, actions and strategies.

A summary is provided on the [Australian Catholic Bishops website](#) sometime later.

What is not covered, also tells a story.

- **WHERE HAVE STATEMENTS BEEN MADE AND NOT FOLLOWED THROUGH?**
- **WHAT ARE OUR PROCESSES FOR REVIEW?**
- **HOW DOES THE CHURCH AS 'PEOPLE OF GOD' INVOLVE AND CONSULT ALL ITS MEMBERS IN THE MISSION OF JESUS?**
- **WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES ABOUT MODELS OF CHURCH AND FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP TODAY?**
- **WHERE ARE WE NOT RESPONDING TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR WORLD?**

We ask Jesus, the Good Shepherd to show as a Church how to be more accountable and transparent.

LIVING IN THE WORLD – THE EXAMPLE OF POPE FRANCIS

We do not live in isolation from the world and Pope Francis gives us his example of –

- How to be active in the world
- How to collaborate with others to make a difference
- How to recognise goodness in others
- How to be humble

HOW DO WE HUMBLY VIEW OUR FAULTS AND OUR GIFTS?

Let us take some time this week and place our issues in prayer, humbly, before Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Amen.

Fr. Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Jesus, The Gate for the Sheep –7 May 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/050717.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook07052017>]