

JESUS & OUR MATERNAL SHEPHERDS
MOTHER'S DAY & GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY
4th SUNDAY OF EASTER – 8 MAY 2022



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Happy Mother's Day.

Today's written homily includes time for our own reflections.

OUTLINE

Let us begin in prayer and blessing.

Then we will recall the teaching of Jesus about being *the Good Shepherd*, and apply it to our life shepherds, and in particular, today, to our *maternal shepherds*.

To help the reflection, I'll share about my mother, and encourage us then to reflect on our maternal shepherds.

We will use three quotes from Pope Francis about Mary and mothers to guide us.

PRAYER & BLESSING

We pray for the people who have been caring, loving and inspirational shepherds to us.

Let us pause and quietly name them in our lives.

[pause]

And let us quietly thank God for them and ask God's blessing on them.

[pause]

After three wonderful celebrations of the *Sacrament of Confirmation* in the past week, and a thoughtful and prayerful *Year Six Mass* on Friday, May 6, 2022, we continue our celebrations this weekend with *Mother's Day*.

We remember our mothers and grandmothers and others with a maternal influence in our lives.

In light of the Gospel today, we name them as shepherds, good shepherds.

- Let us pray for those who have become mothers for the first time since last Mother's Day

We pray God's blessing on each of them.

[pause & pray]

- We now invite the *maternal good shepherds* in the community to stand, as we pray for them and ask God's blessing on them this special day [pause for blessing]

As a faith community, let us show our appreciation to the mothers and all maternal shepherds. [applause]

JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Let us turn to the words of Jesus:

*'I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.
And I lay down my life for the sheep.
I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.
I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.
So there will be one flock, one shepherd.'*

*'My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.
No one will snatch them out of my hand.
What my Father has given me is greater than all else,
and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.
The Father and I are one.'*

Jesus reveals that he is *the Good Shepherd* in John's Gospel, chapter 10. It was only after the account of the healing of a man by Jesus, and the faith response of that man born blind in chapter 9, that Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd in Chapter 10.

We feel the gaze of Jesus in our lives – his gaze which gives *light* to our path in life and his gaze as the Good Shepherd who invites us to *care* for the other sheep.

FAMILY SHEPHERDS

Whether I dine in the kitchen or in the lounge room, I can easily see an A4 photo of my mother on the wall, taken when my sisters and I took Mum out to her favourite restaurant. Though Mum died in 2015, it has been through the grace of God that our relationship remains close.

Mum has been the shepherd who kept us together. As four children, we felt well-loved and special, while at the same time, Mum cared for Francis with his life-long cerebral palsy. Mum was primary care-giver for Francis. She taught us how to strive for justice and live in justice and mercy. She was shepherd of the family budget and taught us not to waste what we had. I marveled as a youngster at the ways Mum and Dad supported each other so deeply. Dad was the storyteller and bushman with a great love of the outdoors. Mum was the city-dweller and political analyst. Dad was a shepherd, protecting us and earning his regular income, as well as spending long hours working on extra duty, to supplement the family budget. Both would teach us about life, using a wonderful array of family stories over the generations.

Dad would tell us about his work, and the lessons he learnt over time.
We could see Mum's ongoing work for ourselves.

This Mother's Day, as I think of Mum as a shepherd, I remember

- Her loving and spiritual gaze
- Her gathering of all that was happening and placing them before God in prayer
- Her accompaniment as she held our hands in life

THE LOVING GAZE

Pope Francis in his [homily](#) on 01/01/2019 spoke about the gaze of Mary and the gaze of mothers.

*“A world that looks to the future without a mother's gaze is shortsighted.
It may well increase its profits, but it will no longer see others as children.
It will make money, but not for everyone.
We will all dwell in the same house, but not as brothers and sisters.
The human family is built upon mothers.
A world in which maternal tenderness is dismissed as mere sentiment
may be rich materially, but poor where the future is concerned.
Mother of God, teach us to see life as you do.
Turn your gaze upon us, upon our misery, our poverty.
Turn to us thine eyes of mercy.”*

Let us pause and remember of the loving gaze of maternal shepherds in our own lives.
[time to remember & thank God]

PONDERING EVERYTHING BEFORE GOD

Pope Francis went on to stress that Mary

*“took everything to heart; she embraced everything, events both good and bad.
And she pondered all these things; she brought them before God.
This was her secret. In the same way, she now takes to heart the life of each of us:
she wants to embrace our every situation and to present it to God.
In today's fragmented world, where we risk losing our bearings,
a Mother's embrace is essential.
... She is the Mother of con-solation: she stands “with” those who are “alone”.
She knows that words are not enough to console;
presence is needed, and she is present as a mother.
Let us allow her to embrace our lives.”*

Let us name the spiritual insights, pondering and embracing of our maternal shepherds.
[time to name & thank God]

TAKEN BY THE HAND AND INTRODUCED TO LIFE

Let us continue to read from the homily of Pope Francis.

*“... And in the journey of life, let us allow ourselves to be taken by the hand.
Mothers take their children by the hand and lovingly introduce them to life.
But how many children today wander off on their own and lose their way.*

*Thinking they are strong, they get lost; thinking they are free, they become slaves.
... We need to learn from mothers that heroism is shown in self-giving,
strength in compassion, wisdom in meekness."*

Let us pause and reflect on these words in the light of the maternal shepherds in our own lives.
[time to reflect & thank God]

We are healed in our own lives by Jesus, the shepherd and light.
Jesus empowers others to be good shepherds.

We thank God today for the maternal shepherds in our lives.
We honour them today.

Happy Mother's Day.
Let us pray.

Father Gerry
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/050822.cfm>

JESUS CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jesus said:
"My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish.
No one can take them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me,
is greater than all,
and no one can take them out of the
Father's hand.
The Father and I are one."



Gospel of John 10:27-30

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Statuette of the Good Shepherd, Pius-Christian Museum

