

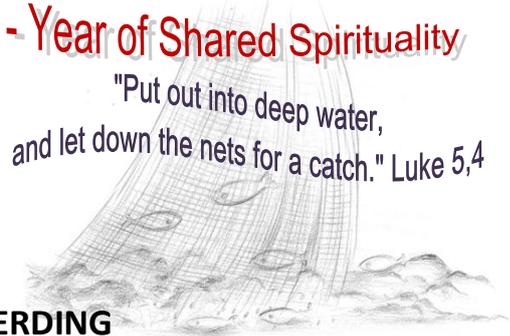


Discovering, deepening
our awareness of our Spirituality

Journey of Enrichment

2011 - Year of Shared Spirituality

"Put out into deep water,
and let down the nets for a catch." Luke 5,4



SHEPHERDING

I am sure that many people share my concern about the present worldwide moral crisis... Each individual has a universal responsibility to shape institutions to serve human needs... We now depend very much on each other. (His Holiness the Dalai Lama)

Contemporary psychology and its insistence on looking after the self seems to be at odds with the Christian call to go beyond oneself. This looking after or 'Shepherding' is a strong motif throughout the Gospels and, we believe, perfectly compatible with looking after the self as a holistic view has taught us.

Holy Week leading to Easter and the Resurrection all take place within the month of April this year and both epitomise and bring to fruition the potent image and role of the Good Shepherd - "I have come that they may have Life and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

The material in these pages is meant to be used as a resource so that it can be weaved into your liturgies. Feel free to pick and choose all or parts of it, and use it as you see fit, within personal or communal reflection/prayer.

Prayers

"The assurance in Christ is that this God loves us with such a passion that God travels with us into death and defeats that death forever. Amen."¹

"My children come to me: I have loved you with an eternal love and I have drawn you to my heart, the source of every good"²

"O Heart all loveable and all loving of my Saviour, be the Heart of my heart... and the sole principle of all my thoughts, words, actions... O Heart all mine, I possess all things in possessing you!"³

"It seems that Our Lord had a particular affection for the sweet name of Shepherd... and he chose for his first adorers not only the poor, but the poor shepherds. The reason? Their way of treating the flocks expressed better than any other symbolic figure the tenderness and concern of this God who is so loving towards his dear sheep."⁴

Intercessions

Prayer to the Good Shepherd

You, ineffable Mystery,
You, who show concern for me,
You, who looks for me amongst the thorns,
And briars of life's travails,
I implore you:
Surround me with the tenderness of your mercy,
Clothe me with the dew of your compassion,

Carry me through the strength of your faithfulness.
Keep me upright when I am about to fall,
Look after me when I am about to get lost,
Touch me when I am fleeing from myself.
Good Shepherd find me and bring me back to myself,
Bring me back to you.⁵

¹ *Liturgies for the Journey of Life*, Dorothy McRae-McMahon, p. 123

² *ibid*

³ *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, St John Eudes; New York PJ Kennedy & Sons, 1946

⁴ St Mary Euphrasia's Conferences, Chapter 6; p.61

⁵ *An Invitation to Mercy*, Gerard Zuidberg and Paul Bruggeman, prayer adapted from God's Way

Readings/Poems

A Shepherd

*What is the duty of a shepherd?
to strengthen what is weak;
to bind up what is broken;
to bring back what was driven away;
to preserve what is well and strong.*

*A true shepherd should be
a burning and shining light
burning interiorly and shining exteriorly,
a light to others in action.*

*To shine only exteriorly is vanity,
to burn solely within is something
but it is not enough for a shepherd of souls.*

*This light must be strong and brilliant,
and it must come from a torch
so flaming and fiery
that it cannot be extinguished.*

(Adapted from a text by SJE in *Memorial of Ecclesiastical Life*)

“Shepherding is about caring for those who are weak, lost, and in need. It is about presence, love and support. Shepherds are needed as much today as they were in the time of Jesus, to love people and guide them to greater life. ...

Those who are not totally self-sufficient need kind, compassionate and competent people, as well as good teachers, to help them develop. ...All of us who want to deepen spiritually and grow in a life of love and prayer need a spiritual father or mother who will help us on this road. Many People...are looking for people who will guide them in a good and healthy life and help them to find meaning to their lives. Aren't we all looking for people who really care for us, understand us respect us?”⁶

“Jesus, the light of the world, calls his disciples to become light for the world. Jesus the Good Shepherd , calls us to become good shepherds, to mature spiritually to help others in need and to seek out those who are lost, crushed or oppressed, who have been pushed to the margins of society.

Shepherds are the ones who lead those who have been entrusted to them to inner freedom- the freedom to make good choices, to take initiative and to grow to greater maturity and love.

In Biblical language, to know someone by name implies a growing understanding of a person, of his or her unique gifts and weaknesses, needs and mission in life. That means taking time with that person, listening, and above all creating a mutual relationship of communion, revealing to that person that he or she is loved, has value and is precious. One can only guide someone if there is no desire to possess, control or manipulate the other, if mutual trust, respect and love have been born between the two.

Being a good shepherd...is being humble and open, recognizing one's faults and compulsions and asking for forgiveness when one has not acted justly. ...We cannot help others to grow to greater maturity if we ourselves are not seeking to grow in greater maturity, compassion and acceptance of self and of others.”⁷

For Reflection:

How is our Good Shepherd inviting you to shepherd now, today?

Does anything have to change for you to follow that invitation?

References/ Further Reading:

Liturgies for the Journey of Life, Dorothy McRae-McMahon, p. 123

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, St John Eudes; New York PJ Kennedy & Sons, 1946

St Mary Euphrasia's Conferences, Chapter 6; p.61

An Invitation to Mercy, Gerard Zuidberg and Paul Bruggeman, prayer adapted from *God's Way*

Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John, Jean Vanier, p. 186

⁶ *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*, Jean Vanier, p. 186

⁷ *ibid*