

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Fourth Sunday of Easter
The World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Shepherd Me, O God

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

As we gather on this Fourth Sunday of Easter, I am reminded of the comforting refrain of the song "Shepherd Me, O God." For me and many others, these lyrics evoke peace, tenderness, and a sense of reassurance, beckoning us to trust in the guidance of our Good Shepherd, who leads us beyond our wants, beyond our fears, from death into life. This refrain is especially purposeful today as we celebrate Jesus as the Good Shepherd in John's beautiful, metaphorically rich Gospel and pray for vocations on our annual commemoration day, now in its sixty-first year.

The recognition of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is life-affirming, as we consider the state of the world today, marked by disappointment, abandonment, abuse, neglect, unrest, and the lack of nurturing among families and friends. It is true to say many souls wander about without the loving guidance of a shepherd. Human beings who have suffered, or even those who have not, seem to yearn for direction, for someone to lead them with love and compassion, and coupled with the deep uncertainties of this time, the call to shepherding others becomes even more urgent.

We know Jesus, our Good Shepherd, exemplifies the selfless love and sacrifice of a true, dedicated shepherd who not only loves his flock, but like no other before him, has laid down his life for his sheep. This commitment demonstrates the depth of his care and his personal relationship with us. He knows our voice, and we know his. And no sheep is forgotten in his flock. This Good Shepherd boldly goes beyond human expectation to protect his sheep. Remarkably, he gave his life for ours with mercy, grace, and abiding love.

On this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, we reflect on the profound responsibility entrusted to us. We are called not only to follow the example of Jesus but also to seek a personal journey to spread God's love and mercy to all. As we contemplate the theme of this year's vocation day, "Sowing Seeds of Hope," let us consider how we can actively contribute to building a more peaceful and hopeful world. We can offer solace to the weary, strength to the discouraged, and hope to the despairing. And in our distinctive roles as priests, religious, and lay faithful, we are called to cultivate environments where vocations can flourish. By fostering communities of prayer, support, and discernment, we can help others to hear God's call in their lives. We are called to be beacons of hope in a world overshadowed by darkness. Through acts of kindness, compassion, and reconciliation, we can bear witness to the transformative power of God's love.

May our lives be a testament to the abundant blessings that flow from answering God's call with a joyful heart.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy