

## **Pastoral Reflection**

### **The Good Shepherd**

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.” (Psalm 23). In this most challenging time for ourselves, our families and all humanity, we can take hope and comfort from the Holy Spirit-inspired words of this Psalm.

Psalm 23 was the Responsorial Psalm at Mass last Sunday. As I joined in this fervent prayer of faith and hope with my brother and sister parishioners, I again realized our total reliance, and our deep friendship with the Lord. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, showers His love and mercy upon us, and through the Holy Spirit, fills our hearts with those divine Gifts enabling us to respond to our daily challenges.

As Psalm 23 continues, “He guides me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.” Each one of us is confronted with difficult decisions during this pandemic regarding family, health, education, work, travel, and a myriad of daily activities. Through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit imbued in our hearts by the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, Christ provides us the wisdom, understanding and fortitude to make the appropriate choices for ourselves and our families in these unprecedented times. As Catholics, we also earnestly pray to our spiritual mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to intercede with the Lord to provide strength and understanding to us.

Psalm 23 continues, “You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.” As humble followers of Christ, we realize that all that we have originates from God. The endless love Christ pours into our hearts enables us to return that love by showing Love of God and Love of Neighbor. As faithful followers of Christ, we live His message of love and truth through daily prayer, receipt of the Sacraments (in accordance with civic advisories and Archdiocese policies during this pandemic) and in acts of charity to family and those in need. Following Christ, we deeply believe in the sanctity of every human being from conception to natural death. We firmly believe in the right of every person to live in dignity: parents able to show good stewardship for their families by receipt of fair wages, food security for families, and access for families to quality education, health care and housing. And we earnestly strive for racial equality in our community and our nation.

As Psalm 23 concludes, “Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.” God’s love that we reflect and show to our family and neighbor in need, and the friendship we build with Christ while growing in holiness on earth, can prepare us to join Him in everlasting happiness and peace in heaven. One suggestion is to recite Psalm 23 as the prayer before evening meal sometime soon, as a poignant reminder that we rely on Christ’s love and guidance as our Good Shepherd.

Peace,

Deacon Don