

# SUNDAY PLUS



LIVERPOOL 2018  
ADOREMUS

## The Good Shepherd

# Good shepherds

by Denise Cottrell Boyce

In an age when priests have increasing responsibility and decreasing numbers, what would make anyone answer the call? What would make any young man embrace celibacy in an era when sex is the dominant icon? A modest salary, in an era of status by brand? Constant service to others when freedom to please yourself is seen as the indicator of well-being? The answer, I think – counter-intuitively – is not more sex, more money or more

time-out. The Good Shepherd isn't trustworthy because his employment package is so excellent. He is the ideal guardian because he sees there is no division between the flock's good and his own. His sheep represent everything he and his family have worked for during centuries of shepherding. The dowries, birthrights, feuds, reconciliations, bad luck and blessings are all around him, visible signs of who he is. Our shepherds of the future have to love us as



Jesus loves us. Jesus' love is visceral, physical, gut-wrenching. In this love he has both exulted and teetered on the brink of despair. For love of us he has cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" So if you're reading this and you're thinking of joining the priesthood – that's the deal. Are you up for it?

The Church needs good shepherds. But, in Europe at least, vocations are scarce. Long before the scandals of the last twenty years, there was a growing, tangible anti-clericalism. Yet people still need a shepherd who will lead them to secure pastures. There is still a place for a Good Shepherd.

*Denise Cottrell Boyce is a theology graduate, parish catechist and the mother of seven children.*

## Smell like the sheep

by Sr Janet Fearn  
FMDM

Work with sheep and you'll smell like a sheep. Pope Francis famously used the image of a shepherd to tell us that caring must be a hands-on experience.

What parents have not played with their children, done "silly" things, become tired, dusty and untidy in the process – and had a wonderful time, perhaps unforgettably so for themselves and their youngsters? What a tragedy it would be to hold back from loving through a fear of the practical consequences!

We all have shepherding responsibilities for others – but sometimes that means "getting stuck in" rather than sitting on the sidelines.

"Vocation" is about openness to people's needs. The lost sheep which Jesus carried home on his shoulder was dirty, smelly, heavy – and desperately in need of his care. Shepherding means doing what we can, when we can and in the best way that we can. God calls us uniquely. As the saying goes, "God does not call the qualified: he qualifies the called."

*Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.*

**Loving Lord, give me the courage to follow you wherever you might lead me. Amen.**

## For better, for worse

by Mary Bell

Marriage is rather like shepherding in that you never know what to expect next. Few of us were aware of the gravity of the vows we were taking when we committed to this special vocation. We cheerfully and optimistically embraced the concepts of better and worse, richer and poorer, in sickness and health, for the rest of our lives, largely in ignorance of life's harsher realities.

At a wedding nobody mentions the exhaustion of child-rearing. Nobody explains that worry makes people bad-tempered or that bitterness or disappointment could lie in wait in the future. Nobody points out that "until death" can be a very long time indeed these days.

Yet the idea of marriage is synonymous with love. In a good

marriage there is trust and companionship, warmth, humour, support in times of stress, friendship and the ordinary everyday comfort of just having someone to stick up for you.

*Mary Bell is a grandmother and a retired teacher who continues to use her skills in the University of the Third Age.*

“**The essential thing is to always keep Jesus at the centre. This means knowing, recognising Jesus, adoring and following Jesus: Christian life is very simple, but we need the grace of the Holy Spirit, so he may awaken in us this will to know Jesus, to adore Jesus and to follow Jesus.**

**Pope Francis**

<b>Today:</b> Acts 4:8-12 1 John 3:1-2 John 10:11-18	<b>Monday:</b> Acts 11:1-18 John 10:1-10	<b>Monday(E):</b> St George (Solemnity): Apocalypse 12:10-12 John 15:18-21 or 15:1-8	<b>Tuesday:</b> Acts 11:19-26 John 10:22-30	<b>Wednesday:</b> 1 Peter 5:5-14 Mark 16:15-20	<b>Thursday:</b> Acts 13:13-25 John 13:16-20	<b>Friday:</b> Acts 13:26-33 John 14:1-6	<b>Saturday:</b> Acts 13:44-52 John 14:7-14	<b>Next Sunday:</b> Acts 9:26-31 1 John 3:18-24 John 15:1-8
---	--	---	---	--	--	--	---	--