

FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

The Lord spoke to Moses; he said: 'Speak to the whole community of the sons of Israel and say to them: "Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. You must not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. You must openly tell him, your neighbour, of his offence; this way you will not take a sin upon yourself. You must not exact vengeance, nor must you bear a grudge against the children of your people. You must love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord." '

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

(R.) The Lord is kind and merciful.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord,
all my being, bless his holy name.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord
and never forget all his blessings. (R.)

It is the Lord who forgives all your guilt,
who heals every one of your ills,
who redeems your life from the grave,
who crowns you with love and compassion. (R.)

The Lord is compassion and love,
slow to anger and rich in mercy.
He does not treat us according to our sins
nor repay us according to our faults. (R.)

As far as the east is from the west
so far does he remove our sins.
As a father has compassion on his sons,
the Lord has pity on those who fear him. (R.)

SECOND READING

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 3:16-23

Didn't you realise that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple. Make no mistake about it: if any one of you thinks of himself as wise, in the ordinary sense of the word, then he must learn to be a fool before he really can be wise. Why? Because the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As scripture says: The Lord knows wise men's thoughts: he knows how useless they are, or again: God is not convinced by the arguments of the wise so there is nothing to boast about in anything human: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Whoever keeps the word of Christ, grows perfect in the love of God.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:38-48

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You have learnt how it was said: Eye for an eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away. 'You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your father in heaven, for he causes the sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not? You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

My Jesus, I believe that you are truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen

GENERAL NOTICES...

NEW TO OUR LADY OF LOURDES? HOW CAN WE SERVE YOU?
Welcome. Wherever you are in your faith journey, it is great to have you. Please visit our website or call the parish office. We're here to serve you.
www.olol7hills.org.au

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/OLOL7Hills/>



LOURDES OVER 50s GROUP

Over 50s Meeting Thursday 9th March 10.30am-1pm.
Please bring a plate for a shared lunch.
Look forward to seeing you there.

SICK AND/OR HOMEBOUND?

Would you like to receive Communion? Or seriously ill or in danger of death? We have dedicated ministers who can visit and bring you communion. Feel free to approach or call Fr Henry for the Holy Anointing of the Sick. Please call the parish office 96222920

FUNERALS

When a Funeral is to be celebrated, please contact Fr. Henry before contacting the Funeral Home. Funerals are not permitted on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation.

BAPTISM

Parents desiring Baptism for their children are encouraged to contact the parish office to arrange for the required preparation class for parents.

MASS INTENTIONS

All Mass intentions must be submitted to the Parish Office on or before Thursday

YOUNG ADULTS GROUP

Meet the second Friday of every month in the Parish Hall at 7pm
For more information contact Ian Epondulan: youtholol7h@gmail.com



KEEP UP TO DATE By visiting our parish website with news , the bulletin, prayers and much more - a great way to stay up to date with what's on in our Parish
Visit www.olol7hills.org.au

LEGION OF MARY

Thursdays at 1.30pm in the Parish Meeting Room. All Welcome

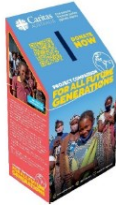
Christ Community Prayer Group

Thursdays at 9.30am in the Parish Meeting Room. All Welcome

VINNIES SUPPORT CENTRES ARE STILL AVAILABLE TO THOSE IN NEED

St Vincent de Paul Support Centres across Greater Sydney are still available and taking calls to arrange for food vouchers or other items to be provided to those in need. If you need assistance, call the Support Centres in Blacktown on (02) 8861 9777, Harris Park on (02) 8861 9757 and Penrith on (02) 8861 9770. To find out more about what support is available, visit <http://vinnies.org.au/covidsupportnsw>

PROJECT COMPASSION



Please take home a Project Compassion box to support Caritas Australia this Lenten season and help support vulnerable people around the world, now and ***For All Future Generations.***

With your support, Caritas Australia has been able to support vulnerable communities around the world tackle poverty, food security, education, water and sanitation and disaster risk reduction.

Acolytes, Ministers, Readers and Altar Servers,
please remember to arrive 15 minutes before the beginning of Mass.

OLOL MINISTRY ROSTER

18/19 February 2023

Acolytes	Vigil: James Dinning 8am: Ernie Gartner 9.30am Ramzee Michael
Ministers	Vigil: Benno Motha 8am: C.Gonzales, H.Gonzales 9.30am: C.Brookes, M.Michael
Readers	Vigil: L.Bellissimo, J.Sarmiento 8am: A.Joseph, A.McNally 9.30am M.Aquino, A, Walker
Altar Servers	Vigil: A. Bagatella, S.Thoms 8am: Sean Park, Philip Park 9.30am Leo Culili
Morning tea (after 9.30am Mass)	Young Adults Group
Flowers	Fennie & Angela
Church cleaning	16 Feb C. Hutchings, A. Peatman
Welcomers	Vigil: Ram Ugre 8am: Suzy Nemorin 9.30am: Maria Michael

25/26 February 2023

Acolytes	Vigil: Abel Do Rosario 8am: Jerome Irudayaraj 9.30am Sandy Manamperi
Ministers	Vigil: M.Mifsud, R.Soares 8am: F.Balatbat, Eugene Mui 9.30am: C.Gonzales, H.Gonzales
Readers	Vigil: Noreen Do Rosario, Catherine Rodrigues 8am: M. Santos, K.Walker 9.30am I.Epondulan, K.Huihui
Altar Servers	Vigil: D. Sant, J. Sant 8am: VOLUNTEERS 9.30am C. Attard, M.Pieris
Morning tea (after 9.30am Mass)	Couples for Christ
Flowers	Annette & Mary B
Church cleaning	22 Feb Jessie Borg Anne McNally
Welcomers	Vigil: VOLUNTEER 8am: Rita Paolini 9.30am: Lena Falzon

OLOL PARISH CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2023

18	Sacramental Meeting (RPT)	4.30pm
21	SRC Meeting Term 1	9.00am
22	Ash Wednesday Masses <i>LENT STARTS</i>	8am 9.15am 7.30pm
22	Sacramental Meeting	6.30pm
23	Social Justice Meeting	6.00pm
24	Stations of the Cross Commences	7.30pm
25	Sacramental Meeting (RPT)	4.30pm
27	Over 50's Bus Trip	9.00am

Special Greetings

I offer a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims taking part in today's Audience, especially the groups from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Australia and the United States of America. I offer a special greeting to the many student groups present. I ask all of you to join me in praying for Father Isaac Achi, of the Diocese of Minna in northern Nigeria, who was killed last Sunday in an attack on his rectory. So many Christians continue to be the target of violence: let us remember them in our prayers! Upon all of you, and upon your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you! Lastly, as usual, my thoughts turn to young people, to the sick, to the elderly and to newlyweds. At the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, I invite each of you to pray and work so that, among all believers in Christ, the path towards full communion may be affirmed ever more, and at the same time, I encourage you to be committed with dedication and in all spheres of life, to being builders of reconciliation and peace. I offer my blessing to all of you.

Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters: In our continuing catechesis on apostolic zeal, the desire to share with others the joy of the Gospel, we now look to its model and source: the example of Jesus himself. As the eternal Word of God, made flesh for our salvation, Jesus' entire life was devoted to communicating and dialoguing with others, first with his heavenly Father in profound prayer, and then with others, especially the poor, the outcast and sinners. He proclaimed the coming of God's Kingdom not only by his preaching, but also by his ministry of healing, reconciliation and forgiveness. As the Good Shepherd, the model for all pastors in the Church, Jesus was completely committed to the welfare of his flock, protecting the fold yet also setting out in search of the lost sheep. Following his example, may we, in our daily lives, draw joy and strength from our union with the Father in prayer, allow our hearts to be shaped by pastoral zeal for the word of God, and strive, in all our words and actions, to share with others its saving message of joy, hope and new life.

POPE FRANCIS AT ANGELUS By Linda Bordon

How to be fulfilled in faith and reciprocate God's love was the message at the heart of the Pope's reflection on Sunday as he addressed believers gathered for the recitation of the Angelus. Reflecting on the Gospel of the day, Pope Francis said Jesus "makes us understand that religious rules are necessary, they are good, but they are only the beginning: to fulfil them, it is necessary to go beyond the letter and live their meaning." Taking his cue from the Gospel of Matthew in which Jesus says "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfil" (Mt 5:17), he explained that *To fulfil* is a key word to understand Jesus and his message.

Ritualistic observance is pointless

It is not enough to lead a life respecting the laws, he said, to refrain from killing but hurting with words, to refrain from committing adultery but living a love "tainted by duplicity and falsehood," to take a solemn oath "if one then acts with hypocrisy. "This," he underscored, "is not fulfilment." The Holy Father explained that "Making an offering to God reciprocates the gratuity of his gifts." The message is clear, he said: "God loves us first, freely, taking the first step towards us, without us deserving it." *"We cannot celebrate His love without in our turn taking the first step towards reconciliation with those who have hurt us."* "In this way, there is fulfilment in God's eyes," the Pope continued, "otherwise external, purely ritualistic observance is pointless." He said that "religious rules are necessary, they are good, but they are only the beginning: to fulfil them, it is necessary to go beyond the letter and live their meaning." *"The commandments that God has given us must not be locked up in the airless vaults of formal observance."*

Aspire to the maximum

Pope Francis said that this is a timeless issue and reminded believers that faith is not "a formal observance, which is satisfied with the *bare minimum*, whereas Jesus invites us to aspire to the *maximum possible*." *"God does not reason with calculations and tables; he loves us as one who is enamoured: not to the minimum, but to the maximum! He does not say, 'I love you up to a certain point'".* True love, the Pope continued, "is never up to a certain point, and is never satisfied; love goes beyond, one cannot do without." He said the Lord showed us this "by giving his life on the cross and forgiving his murderers, and he entrusted to us the commandment most dear to him: that we love each other *like he* loved us. *"This is the love that gives fulfilment to the Law, to faith, to life!"* Pope Francis concluded encouraging Christians to ask themselves how they live their faith: "Is it a matter of calculations, formalism, or a love story with God? Am I content with not doing harm, of keeping the "façade" in good order, or do I try to grow in love for God and others?" Every now and then, he said, check yourself on Jesus' great commandment, asking whether "I love my neighbour as He loves me?" *"Because perhaps we are inflexible in judging others and forget to be merciful, as God is with us."*

Rt. Rev. Greenshields

I don't want to add too much because I think that was a very eminent answer to it. But it's a warning, isn't it, to those of us who have. But I think that it was something that the Pope mentioned here about young people. Bright, good young minds deserve the opportunity to develop. Now, from my own experience in other parts of the world, bright young female minds deserve the right to the same opportunities exactly as any others in whatever country, but especially in the developing countries. And that would be my plea. The rights of women and young women in particular have to be recognised as paramount.

'THE WELL' offers spiritual nourishment

Need some inspiration and spiritual encouragement ? Why not check out The Well? The Diocese's 'on demand' streaming site has a tonne of video and prayer resources for you to explore and engage with during this difficult time. Check it out on www.thewell.org.au



FROM FR. HENRY DUC

Dear Friends,

Throughout Jesus' life, he always had a soft spot for the poor and those considered as sinners by the elites of the time. Jesus was absolutely determined to expose the Pharisees and the scribes for their hypocrisy and rigidity. He often shared the table with the former, and was accused by the latter as a dangerous element trying to bring down Judaism. This was a very serious and deadly charge that Jesus had to deal with. In the Gospel last week, he made it very clear that he had no intention to undermine the Law and the Prophets, but intended to make it better by highlighting his effort to improve the Fifth, the Sixth, the Eighth and the Ninth Commandments. In other words, he proved that he was stricter in dealing with the issue of observing Moses' Law.

Today Jesus continues the same catechetical process by singling out two particular areas of the Covenant namely the eye-for-eye law in Exodus 21.24, and the commandment of love thy neighbour in Leviticus 19.18 as the areas of reform. With the eye-for-eye law, Jesus challenges the disciples not to opt for the stand 'to get even' as given by the law, on the contrary they should take a specific position meaning to offer no resistance, but kindness and compassion to those who wrong them. It's worth noting that according to Jewish law, if a man gave his coat as collateral for a loan, the lender was expected to return it to him before nightfall so he wouldn't freeze to death. Jesus was prepared to go a long way by encouraging the disciples to give both the tunic and the cloak to the one seeking just the tunic. By taking on the commandment concerning the love of thy neighbour, Jesus really revolutionizes the traditional commandment of love as he encourages the disciples to love their enemies and pray for their persecutors on the basis of God's unconditional and indiscriminative love for all people on earth, no matter whether they are good or bad, honest or dishonest. Inspired by the challenges Jesus presents to us in the Gospel today to encourage us to become better and closer to the example of our heavenly Father, let us pray for the grace to transform us into better witnesses to Him through words and actions oozing out the beautiful virtues of unconditional love, kindness and compassion.

Have a heavenly-Father oriented week,

Fr. Henry

PARISH NEWS...

FEAST DAY OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES: THANK YOU

Once again, I would like to thank everyone for filling the church with your enthusiastic presence last Sunday. Our thanks also go to the School staff and students for arranging the exhibition and the liturgical movement for us to enjoy, and to our school and volunteers for their helping hands in providing food, entertainment, setting up, serving and cleaning. Especially thank you Evelyn for coordinating the whole program. *Fr. Henry*

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL MEETING

13 members of our Parish Pastoral Council met last Wednesday starting with a prayer and a reflection upon the article entitled Pope Francis' Fiercest Opposition: the Church's Clerical Workforce by Robert Mickens from La Croix International, bringing to light the efforts of a group of clergy led by some powerful ones trying to undermine Pope Francis' reform endeavor by spreading rumor and false accusations. We need to be aware of this divisive move in the Church often disguised as faith defenders. The meeting proceeded with reports from the school and other Parish groups, including the Social group about the logistics for our Parish Feast day.



Innovative learning in a changing world

Enrolling Now

OUR LADY of LOURDES
SEVEN HILLS

OPEN DAYS

6 March 2023 6:00pm - 7:30pm

8 March 2023 6:00pm - 7:30pm



Start of Lent
22nd February
Mass Times:
8am
9.15am (school mass)
7.30pm

'Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return'

Stations of the Cross

Every Friday during LENT.

Starts Friday 24th

February at 7.30pm.



LOURDES OVER 50s GROUP BUS TRIP

For those booked on the bus trip Monday 27th February, please be at the Parish Hall by 8.45am for a 9.00am departure. If you require further information, please kindly contact John Lyons on 0402 260 856

Evolutionary Spirituality

Retreat: 3 – 5 March

The Social Justice group of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, invite you to an evolutionary spirituality retreat from Friday 3 March at 7pm to Sunday 5 March at 2pm at the Guntawang Environmental Bushland Retreat at Oakdale. During the weekend there will be times of reflection, dialogue and encounters within natural bushland. Registration is \$95 for the whole weekend. To RSVP, please contact - antiphon1@outlook.com or socialjustice@olol7hills.com.au or phone 0429 595 231.

Social Justice. We Need YOU and your friends for 2 hours **6:15pm-8:15pm** (arrival from 5:30pm) **Tuesday 28th February** at Sydney Alliance Assembly, Morley Centre, 2 Darcy Road, Westmead. Bishop Vincent will be attending. This is a rare opportunity to pressure and persuade NSW politicians to act on the common good agenda of united civil society. Mark the date or even better register at <https://events.humanitix.com/sydney-alliance-nsw-election-assembly-february-28> (Organisation: Catholic Diocese of Parramatta). Contact Terry for more information on 0409373715 or socialjustice@olol7hills.com.au **The issues:** cost of living, climate change, affordable and renewable energy, affordable and social housing, and fair renting reforms (including removing no-grounds eviction and climate-proofing rental properties)

Ordination to the Presbyterate

The Diocese of Parramatta wishes to congratulate Fr Adam Carlow, Fr Matthew Dimian and Fr Jack Elkazzi following their ordination to the priesthood on Thursday 2 February. Visit catholicoutlook.org in the coming week for an article and photographs from the ordination as well as a video introducing the new priests to the Diocese.

MET Lenten Scripture Reflection Night: 21 February

Looking for a Scripture reflection session on the season of Lent? You and your key contacts are most welcome to attend the 2023 Diocesan Lenten Scripture Reflection Night with Dr Laurie Woods. Tuesday 21 February – 6:30PM to 8:30PM. Downstairs at the Bishop Bede Heather Centre, 1-5 Marion Street, Blacktown. RSVP via <https://pfparra.org.au/lent2023>

Glenbrook Parish Shroud of Turin Presentation and Talk: 21 February

St Finbar's Parish, Glenbrook, is hosting a presentation by local parishioner and former journalist William West on the Shroud of Turin on Tuesday 21 February at 7.30pm. William will discuss the history of the Shroud, which he explores in his book *Riddles of the Shroud – Questions Science Can't Answer*. Entry is via gold coin donation. To RSVP contact secretary@stfinbars.org.au

Holy Spirit Mission: 25 February

This year's speaker is Br. Colin Calmiano presented by Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) Parramatta. Saturday 25th February, 9am to 5pm St Patricks Church, 51-59 Allawah Street, Blacktown. Praise and Worship, Individual Prayer Ministry, Reconciliation, Kids Ministry and Parish Mass celebrated by Fr. Reginaldo Lavilla at 5:30pm. Register at <https://qr.link/VuWp62>

Sydney Alliance NSW Election Assembly: 28 February

Join Bishop Vincent Long and people from across the Diocese to participate in a NSW Election Assembly with NSW Treasurer Matt Kean (LIB), Shadow Treasurer Daniel Mookhey (ALP) and representatives of the crossbench. The assembly will focus on social justice issues like housing, climate and cost of living. The assembly will be held on Tuesday 28 February from 6:15pm – 8:15pm at the Morley Centre, 2 Darcy Rd, Westmead. Please register at <https://bit.ly/nswelectionassembly>.

MET – Worship Celebrating Holy Week Seminar: 4 March

The MET - Worship team are organising a seminar for acolytes and ministers at the altar (senior servers) in preparation for the celebration of Holy Week. Presented by liturgist Chris Ohlsen, the session will be held on Saturday 4 March from 9.30am to 3pm at the Bishop Bede Heather Centre, 1-5 Marion St Blacktown. Refreshments and lunch will be provided. To RSVP by 28 February, please contact mary.gale@parracatholic.org or phone (02) 8838 3456.

Clean up Diocese of Parramatta Day: 5 March

Catholic Youth Parramatta and MET – Peace, Justice and Ecology invite you to take action! On Clean Up Australia Day, Sunday 5 March, witness to the call to take care of God's creation. Join or organise a group to clean up a site in your local area. Express your interest today by visiting <https://parracatholic.org/cleanup/>

MET Worship Music for Pascal Triduum Workshop: 7 March

Musicians and liturgy planners are invited to attend an evening exploring music for the Pascal Triduum Tuesday 7 March from 7pm to 9pm at the Bishop Bede Heather Centre, Blacktown. The session will be presented by Eric Grella, Music Formation Facilitator, MET, and Assistant Music Director at St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta. To RSVP by 2 March, please contact hannah.portelli@parracatholic.org or call 0460 037 795.

Process & significance of the change to the Constitution & the Voice to Parliament CCJP Seminar with Patricia Anderson AO. Pat Anderson is an Alyawarre woman known nationally and internationally as an advocate for the rights and health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Ms Anderson is Chair of the Lowitja Institute and has extensive experience in Aboriginal health, including community development, policy formation and research ethics. She was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2014 for distinguished service to the Indigenous community as a social justice advocate, particularly through promoting improved health, and educational and protection outcomes for children. Ms Anderson was Co-Chair of the Referendum Council that released its final report in 2017 and has since led the work of the Uluru Dialogue in partnership with the ILC UNSW. Pat will speak on the process & significance of the change to the Constitution & the Voice to Parliament. Thursday 23 February, 4pm –6pm, Convent of Mercy, 6 Victoria Rd, Parramatta, No cost, and refreshments provided.

For more information, RSVP and flyer, click http://www.ccjpoz.org/templates/ccj/page/page_html_standard.php?secID=50.

Positions Vacant:

Parish Office Administration Assistant – St Thomas Aquinas Parish, Springwood.
Policy Coordinator – Diocese of Parramatta – **Applications close 10pm Monday 20 February**
People and Culture Adviser – Diocese of Parramatta – **Applications close 10pm Monday 20 February**
Sacramental Coordinator – Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Kellyville – **Applications close Monday 20 February**
More details at: parracatholic.org/employment



POPE FRANCIS' CATECHESIS ON THE PASSION OF EVANGELIZATION:

The passion for evangelization: The apostolic zeal of the believer. Jesus, model of evangelization

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Last Wednesday we began a series of catechesis on the passion of evangelization, that is, on the apostolic zeal that should enliven the Church and every Christian. Today, let us look at the unsurpassable model of proclaiming: *Jesus*. The Christmas Day Gospel defined him as the “Word of God” (cf. *Jn* 1:1). The fact that he is the *Logos*, that is, the Word, highlights an essential aspect of Jesus: He is always in relation, outgoing, never isolated, always in relation, outgoing. The word, in fact, exists to be transmitted, communicated. So it is with Jesus, the Eternal Word of the Father, reaching out to us, communicated to us. Christ not only has words of life, but makes his life a Word, a message: that is,

he lives always turned toward the Father and toward us. Always looking at his Father who sent him and looking at us to whom he was sent. Indeed, if we look at his days, described in the Gospels, we see that intimacy with the Father — prayer — occupies first place. This is why Jesus gets up early, when it is still dark, and goes into deserted areas to pray (cf. *Mk* 1:35; *Lk* 4:42), to speak with the Father. He makes all of his decisions and most important choices after having prayed (cf. *Lk* 6:12; 9:18). It is precisely within this relationship, in the prayer which connects him to the Father in the Spirit, that Jesus discovers the meaning of his being human, of his existence in the world, because he is on a mission for us, sent by the Father to us. It is thus interesting to note the first public act that he accomplishes after the years of his hidden life in Nazareth. Jesus does not work a great wonder, he does not send an impactful message, but he mingles with the people who were going to be baptized by John. In this way, he offers us the key by which he acts in the world: spending himself for sinners, putting himself in solidarity with us without distance, in a total sharing of life. In fact, speaking about his mission, he will say that he did not come “to be served but to serve, and to give his life” (*Mk* 10:45). Every day after praying, Jesus dedicates his entire day to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and dedicates it to people, above all to the poorest and weakest, to sinners and to the sick (cf. *Mk* 1:32-39). That is, Jesus is in contact with the Father in prayer and then he is in contact with all the people through his mission, through catechesis, to teach the path of the Kingdom of God.

Now, should we want to represent his style of life with an image, it would not be difficult for us to find it: Jesus himself offers it to us. We have heard him, speaking of himself as the *Good Shepherd*, the one who, he says, “lays down his life for the sheep” (*Jn* 10:11). This is Jesus. In reality, being a shepherd was not just a job that required time and a lot of dedication; it was a true and proper way of life: 24 hours a day, living with the flock, accompanying it to pasture, sleeping among the sheep, taking care of those who were weakest. In other words, Jesus does not do something for us, but he gives everything. He gives his life for us. He has a *pastoral heart* (cf. *Ez* 34:15). He is a shepherd for all of us. Indeed, to sum up the action of the Church in one word, precisely the term “pastoral” is often used. And to evaluate our pastoral work we need to confront ourselves with the model, confront ourselves with Jesus, Jesus the Good Shepherd. Above all, we can ask ourselves: do we imitate him, drinking from the wells of prayer so that our heart might be in harmony with his? Intimacy with him is, as a beautiful volume by Abbot Chautard suggested, *the soul of every apostolate*. Jesus himself clearly said it to his disciples: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (*Jn* 15:5). If we stay with Jesus, we discover that his pastoral heart always beats for the person who is confused, lost, far away. And ours? How many times do we express our attitude toward people who are a bit difficult or with whom we have a bit of difficulty: “But it’s their problem, let them work it out...”. But Jesus never said this, never. Instead, he always went to meet all the marginalized, the sinners. He was accused of this — of being with sinners — because he brought God’s salvation precisely to them. We have heard the parable of the lost sheep, found in chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke (cf. vv. 4-7). Jesus also speaks about the lost coin and about the prodigal son. If we want to train our apostolic zeal, we should always have chapter 15 of Luke before our eyes. Read it often. There we can understand what apostolic zeal is. There we discover that God does not remain contemplating the sheep pen, nor does he threaten them so they won’t leave. Rather, if one leaves and gets lost, he does not abandon it but goes in search of it. He does not say, “It left. That’s its fault. That’s its business!” His pastoral heart reacts in another way: the pastoral heart *suffers* and the pastoral heart *takes risks*. It *suffers*: yes, God suffers for those who leave and, while he mourns over them, he loves them even more. The Lord suffers when we distance ourselves from his heart. He suffers for all who do not know the beauty of his love and the warmth of his embrace. But, in response to this suffering, he does not withdraw; rather, he *takes a risk*. He leaves the 99 sheep who are safe and ventures out for the lost one, thus doing something both risky and unreasonable, but consonant with his pastoral heart which misses the one who left. The longing for those who have left is constant in Jesus. And when we hear that someone has left the Church, what do we want to say? “Let them work it out”. No. Jesus teaches us nostalgia for those who have left. Jesus does not feel anger or resentment but pure longing for us. Jesus feels nostalgic for us and this is God’s zeal. And I wonder, do we have similar sentiments? Perhaps we see those who have left the flock as adversaries or enemies. “And this person?” “No, they’ve gone to the other side, they’ve lost the faith, they’re going to hell...”, and we are serene. When we meet them at school, at work, on the streets of the city, why don’t we think instead that we have a beautiful opportunity to witness to them the joy of a Father who loves them and has never forgotten them? Not to proselytize, no! But that the Word of the Father might reach them so we can walk together. To evangelize is not to proselytize. To proselytize is something pagan; it is neither religious nor evangelical. There is a good word for those who have left the flock and we have the honour and the burden of being the ones to speak that word. Because *the* Word, Jesus, asks this of us: to always draw near to everyone, with an open heart, because he is like that. Perhaps we have been following and loving Jesus for some time and have never wondered if we share his feelings, if *we suffer* and *we take risks* in harmony with Jesus’s heart, with this pastoral heart, close to Jesus’s pastoral heart! This is not about proselytism, as I said, so that others become “one of us”. No, this is not Christian. It is about loving so that they might be happy children of God.

In prayer, let us ask for the grace of a pastoral heart, an open heart that draws near to everyone, so as to bear the Lord’s message as well as to feel Christ’s longing for each of them. For without this love that suffers and takes risks, our life does not work. If we Christians do not have this love that suffers and takes risks, we risk pasturing only ourselves. Shepherds who are shepherds of themselves, instead of being shepherds of the flock, are people who comb “exquisite” sheep.

We do not need to be shepherds of ourselves, but shepherds for everyone.

