

SUNDAY PLUS

Follow the leader

Jesus the shepherd

By Fr Denis McBride C.Ss.R.

The wandering figure of the good shepherd, anxiously tending his sheep to the point where he is willing to surrender his life for them, is the image Jesus uses about himself in today's Gospel. The good shepherd is not an image of religious authority that is eternally pleased with its own importance, blind to the useless pain it causes in those it leads. The authority of the shepherd costs the shepherd, not the sheep. The image of the shepherd cannot be separated from how the shepherd cares for his own sheep. His concern is not untroubled. His courage is not bloodless. His love is not detached. When we see how Jesus behaves as a leader, we see his tenderness and courage.

Jesus tackles his opponents, face to face.
He confronts those who steal the dignity of the little ones.
He names the wolves in sheep's clothing.
He is willing to leave his enemies looking sheepish.
He warns his followers about the rough terrain ahead.
He goes there before them.
He is defensive when people attack his own followers.
He is realistic about people's wayward ways.
He endures isolation and insult.
He faces his own fear but stays loyal.
He risks being slaughtered himself.
He does lay down his life for his sheep.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.



Act out of love

By Michael George

I have often reminded colleagues in school that children remember their teachers. Although they will not always remember everything teachers have taught, children will remember their teachers as people. Through instruction, but most importantly through nurture and example, teachers make an impression on lives that endures far beyond school-leaving-age.

Many children are enthusiastic to learn and immediately respond positively to everything their teacher communicates, although

some children also find that there are barriers to their learning.

In today's Gospel, Jesus led those who knew they wanted to be with him. He also led those who at the time had a barrier: they had not actively chosen his presence. Acting out of love, Jesus, the Teacher, included all and sought the best for all.

Jesus himself nurtures and provides the example for teachers: to act out of love for each precious child and strive to bring out the best in all.

Michael George has served Catholic primary schools as a teacher and headteacher for more than twenty years.

Feast of the week

Monday 23 April

St George

The Military Saints, Warrior Saints and Soldier Saints are patron saints, martyrs and other saints associated with the military. They were originally composed of the Early Christians who were soldiers in the Roman army during the persecution of Christians, especially the Diocletianic Persecution of AD 303–313.

Most of the Early Christian military saints were soldiers of the Roman Empire who had become Christian and, after

refusing to participate in Imperial cult rituals of loyalty to the Roman Emperor, were subjected to corporal punishment including torture and martyrdom.

Veneration of these saints, most notably of Saint George, was reinforced in the Latin Church during the time of the Crusades. The title of "champion of Christ" (*athleta Christi*) was originally used for these saints, but in the late medieval period also conferred on contemporary rulers by the Pope.

Since the Middle Ages, more saints have been added to various military-related patronages.

Source: Wikipedia

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does not humiliate or abandon people to remorse.

Pope Francis

Lord, I pray for everyone in positions of leadership, that they can act with justice, integrity, compassion and understanding. Amen.

Today:
Acts 4:8-12
1 John 3:1-2
John 10:11-18

Monday:
Acts 11:1-18
John 10:1-10

Tuesday:
Acts 11:19-26
John 10:22-30

Wednesday:
Acts 12:24 – 13:5
John 12:44-50

Thursday:
1 Peter 5:5-14
Mark 16:15-20

Friday:
Acts 13:26-33
John 14:1-6

Saturday:
Acts 13:44-52
John 14:7-14

Next Sunday:
Acts 9:26-31
1 John 3:18-24
John 15:1-8