

Chapter 1 : Ignatian Meditation Guides - Soul Shepherding

David Demola's new book "Meditations of a Shepherd" is a tapestry of wise apostolic insights. John Kilpatrick, Founder & Senior Pastor of Church of His Presence, Daphne, Alabama This book is the outpouring of a pastor's heart and expresses daily bread out of which pastors can offer their own congregation.

Be you a Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, follower of shamanist practices, this text speaks to any open heart. The reason is that it is pure poetry, being composed solely of metaphors. Why not try it out as a morning meditation? Sit comfortably and follow David the shepherd as he walks through life. He knows each animal individually and will do anything to protect it from danger or any harm, to find the best pasture, the surest shelter for the night. Imagine that Love shepherding you through this day. I shall not want What an amazing statement: The spiritual life is a life of abundance, not suffering or ascetic privation. The Bible has some amazing metaphors to describe this abundance, like the passage in Malachi which speaks of the sluice-gates of heaven pouring forth their abundance on the receptive heart, or Jesus saying that all that the Creator has is ours – surely the most amazing statement on abundance ever uttered. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures Life does not have to be one of constant rush, stress and pressure. When one lives in the now, in the awareness of the Presence, one gets as much or more done, but with no stress. Things start to flow. Visualize yourself as one of the sheep lying down in lush green pastures. Feel the soft carpet of grass. REST there, and at any stressful moment in the day, come back there, be it only for a brief moment. He leadeth me beside the still waters For a nation of shepherds living in a semi-arid climate, water was the most precious resource. Water means above all life. Feel yourself as one of the sheep drinking deep draughts of these living waters which are always available, because they are in us, deep in the wellspring of our heart. He restoreth my soul Total contentment and the deepest satisfaction are our inheritance. Our soul rests in a deep sea of calm and expresses perfect poise and composure, permanent, boundless bliss. Visualize yourself expressing an all-pervading harmony, the uninvaded rhythm of effortless being, complete release. All these qualities are already there, deep down inside us, if only we would love ourselves enough to give ourselves the time and space to tune in to their presence. Once again, do not mentalize this meditation; keep in anchored in the heart – visualize and especially feel the power of these simple metaphors. Yea though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I shall feel no evil: Because I was on the spiritual path, I would berate myself very harshly for having such attacks. I never took a pill or saw an M. It was getting worse and worse, and one night at 1. With immense love in her voice, she said one sentence that lifted me out of that depression in five minutes. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies This metaphor is an assurance that we will always have the resources to meet any challenge that faces us in life. Providence will never allow us to face a situation we cannot master if we trust in its help. Thou anointest my head with oil Oil is here an image for consecration, inspiration, charity and especially gentleness. So just feel this oil of gentleness being poured over your head! My cup runneth over Once more, the psalm returns to a metaphor of abundance. Note that the cup is not just full; it runs over! Just know that this abundance is already yours now for the taking – although learning how to accept this totally free abundance may take quite a time, as we have to unlearn a great deal! Visualize yourself sitting under a torrent which is just pouring over you, pouring goodness, pouring, pouring, pouring! Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life Mercy is a quality one does not hear such a lot about nowadays. Yet it is such a beautiful quality. It means a kind and compassionate treatment of a person where severity would be expected or even merited.

Chapter 2 : Meditations of the 23rd Psalm

I once read a beautiful meditation on the Nativity that imagined one of the shepherds who came to adore Christ in a similar attitude. Imagine a poor shepherd, like the servant of St. Ignatius, distraught because he lacked the words to express the sentiments he felt.

And the shepherds were very afraid. I have some very good news for you – news that will make everyone happy. He is Christ, the Lord" Luke 2: They smelled like sheep. They slept on the ground. Their jobs made them little or no money. They came from the lower rung of society. Abraham, Moses, and David were heroes larger than life that were remembered for greater things than shepherding. Of all the people to whom God could have revealed this startling birth, why choose shepherds? With all the power brokers in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome, why choose the countryside outside of the insignificant and tiny village of Bethlehem? Well, there are some possible technical, theological, and historical reasons for this. These were Bethlehem shepherds, the shepherds who raised the sheep offered as sacrifices at Passover. Abraham, Moses, and David were all shepherds and God made great promises to them about deliverance and a Messiah so now God is showing he honors his promises by announcing the coming of the Christ, the Messiah, to shepherds first. The image of a shepherd is the image Jesus chooses to use for his example of a leader – one who pastors, who shepherds his sheep and is even willing to lay down his life for his sheep. God is frequently identified as the loving, tender Shepherd of his people Psalm Jesus identifies himself as the Good Shepherd John God wants us to know that he knows us and cares for us and will never abandon us. He longs to bless us and make our lives full. He wants us in his presence and will deal with us lovingly and tenderly. Shepherds were despised and unwanted. They lived far from the busy lives of most people of their day. They were not important – not personally, politically, or economically. If God chose to reveal his glory first to them, then the King of glory is making an important statement to each one of us personally: Jesus came for me! I am not too low, too insignificant, too unimportant, too powerless, too forgotten, or too anything for God to love me, search for me, find me, and want to bring me home. If I wander from him he will come looking for me Jesus told stories about shepherds because they did crazy things to find their lost sheep Matthew Jesus, as our Good Shepherd, has done crazier things than even the craziest shepherd of his day. So when we hear all the Christmas songs and see all the nativity scenes and read all the birth stories about Jesus that mention shepherds, we are reminded of this: God is crazy about me! He longs to have me in his presence and offer me his tender care. He will not leave me or forsake me. In Jesus, God laid down his life for me to bring me back into his family and will one day bring me into his home, forever. The story of lowly and forgotten shepherds keeping watch out in the fields is more than a historical flourish.

Chapter 3 : MEDITATIONS AND MEMORIES: THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

Auto Suggestions are available once you type at least 3 letters. Use up arrow (for mozilla firefox browser alt+up arrow) and down arrow (for mozilla firefox browser alt+down arrow) to review and enter to select.

Meditation on Psalm The Lord, in His love, compassion, and power will supply all the spiritual and temporal needs of believers. The relationship between the Lord and a believer is close, tender, and eternal. The Lord knows every detail of our spiritual, mental, and physical conditions Psalm Psalm 23 has been a source of blessing to generations of believers. David, the Shepherd King of Israel 2 Samuel 7: David knew that sheep need to be cared for, provided with good pasture and with clean water. He knew that sheep wander and have to be searched for and brought back to the flock. David knew that sheep need guidance and protection against disease and predators 1 Samuel The Lord was moved with love and compassion when He saw multitudes of people waiting to listen to Him. Their leaders were not meeting their spiritual needs, they were not leading, teaching, and protecting them. The Lord, the Shepherd of the sheep, provides spiritual food as well as food to meet the needs of our bodies James 1: He gives us His written Word on which to feed and meditate 1 Peter 2: The Holy Spirit, Who dwells within us, will teach us, and if we are obedient to the truths He reveals, will empower us to obey the will of God. Sheep with good pasture, and who are feeling safe, will lie down peacefully without fear. The Lord is always with a believer and He will be with us when we pass through death. Trials and death are real, but for the believer, there is light beyond. The Sovereign Lord, Who is our Shepherd, provides all our blessings in the midst of this evil world in which we are strangers and pilgrims. If we obey His teaching, our lives will be lived in accordance with the will of God and to His glory. The Lord is seeking to lead us to greater spiritual maturity that, by grace, we may be conformed more and more to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. It has often been said that Psalm 23 reveals the source, for the believer, of a happy life, a happy death, and a happy eternity. The source is the Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. Going before us is our omnipotent Shepherd. We are protected on every side Psalm Goodness and mercy follow on my track, With such a Shepherd, nothing can I lack.

Chapter 4 : The Shepherd's Prayer by Marian T. Horvat

*Meditations of a Shepherd King [Ronnie Guynes] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Based on what is probably the most poignant of all the Psalms-the twenty-third-'Meditations of a Shepherd King' unveils the heart of the shepherd boy.*

The familiar musical setting of itâ€™and one for which the lyrics follow almost exactly the text of the KJVâ€™was written around by Jessie Seymour Irvine. She lived in the town of Crimond, in Scotland, where her father was a minister. The tune was named after the town. They suggested this hymn. The mother retorted that in Scotland it was sung at parties, picnics, bus runs, weddings and more. Its message is universal. Little children love and learn it, but it still has much to teach those who are in their latter years. How sad for anyone to think that this beautiful declaration of faith is "inappropriate" to be used when a couple is exchanging wedding vows! Far from being funereal, the psalm is bursting with life, even as it takes us through the valley of the shadow. The sheep are the people of God. It is those by whom He is recognized and obeyed as "the Lord" who can claim the blessings alluded to. This declaration from the heart of a child of God assures us of: When troubles come, and the enemy assaults us, it is so easy to get our eyes off God and obsess over our problems. But this psalm provides an antidote. The focus is on the Lord, and His care of us. As the Shepherd, He faithfully guards and guides the sheep, and provides for their wholesome nourishment. Even the ominous danger of the valley of the shadow is quickly dismissed in the confidence that He will go with us through it. The psalm begins with "the Lord," and ends with "the Lord forever. Under His shepherding, "I shall not want. For this reason, His sheep enjoy utter peace and contentment in His care. If you wish to study further the work of the shepherd, and how that provides a wonderful picture of what the Lord does for us, read the devotional classic A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, by Philip Keller. Keller was himself a shepherd in British Columbia, Canada, and speaks from experience. In connection with the above verse, Keller comments, "It is a tragic truth that many people who really have never come under His direction or management claim that "The Lord is my Shepherd. One cannot have it both ways. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. Here is the leading of the Shepherd into green pastures, and beside still waters. It is a portrait of abundant provision for our spiritual nourishment, and for our restoration and refreshment. In soul weariness, He refreshes and strengthens us; in soul sickness, He heals us; and when we wander into the paths of sin, He draws us back, forgives and cleanses us. Only when free of these pests can they relax. They must be free from hunger" Keller. In the last clause of vs. That is, He does it for the honour of His great name, not because we have somehow merited it. And the fact that there are righteous or right paths implies that there are also unrighteous or wrong ones. God guides us in the best way, avoiding those byways that would lead us into danger, and on to spiritual ruin. If we wander offâ€™as sheep are prone to doâ€™we put ourselves in peril. But we can trust His judgment, even when these things are not evident now to our feeble sight. The guidance of the Lord is a frequent theme of Scripture. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. The valley of the shadow of death includes what leads up to death i. The valley of the shadow of death pictures a deep and dangerous gorge where death seems imminent. The same terminology is used in Job of the experience of death itself Job. The Hebrew word tsalmaveth means a deep darkness, or a death-shadow. There may be more than one of these in each life, dark valleys to be traversed before the final one. But we need to assure our hearts with the realization that many times dismal valleys lead on to richer pasturing beyond. And notice the sudden change from "He vs. The Lord is no theoretical "He" but an ever-present "You," with whom we can have intimate communion. And we do not pass through the valley of the shadow because, somehow, the shepherd has made a wrong turn, or has grown careless. Such times are a necessary part of His loving plan. All our experiences, both of the dark and of the light, will be worked together for our good and His glory cf. Whatever comes, He is still present with us. And His wise guidance and protection never cease. The rod also can be used to discipline the sheep. African herders can hurl their rods with great accuracy to drive a sheep away from a poisonous plant, or rocky cliff. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my

head with oil; my cup runs over. Sheep are often threatened by predators. The shepherd has to keep a sharp eye out for them, while the sheep are feeding. We too need leaders who are watchful of danger. The anointing oil used by shepherds not only has soothing and healing properties, it is a preventative, protecting the sheep from parasites. These can irritate the sheep, drain them of needed strength and vitality, and even bring disease. But God knows the danger to us, and provides that which will arm us against the threat they pose. There is a further thought here if we think of the anointing oil as that which was applied to visitors in Bible times cf. Because they had journeyed in the hot sun and along dusty ways, it was a courtesy to anoint the heads of those who entered the home with olive oil. Also, they were given a cup of choice wine to refresh them, and the custom was to fill the cup until it ran over. This indicated the generosity and abundance of the host cf. Perhaps we can think of the application of this to the work of the Holy Spirit. On this side of the cross, each believer is considered to be a priest of God I Pet. And as Old Testament priests were anointed with oil in preparation for their service cf. Thus they may speak of specially anointed songs, or preachers, or anointed meetings. But that is not how the Bible treats it. The anointing seems to take place once, at conversion, and "abide" after that I Jn. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever This is so, even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The Amplified Bible has "the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place. It is used that way in describing the labours of a faithful wife and mother caring for her "household," Prov. We look forward to a uniting of our spiritual family in the presence of the Lord cf. Further, it is possible the rendering should be as the LXX has it "return," rather than "dwell. In the millennial kingdom, and on into eternity, there will be ready access to the throne of God, and continuing fellowship with Him. This sixth verse of the psalm seems to lead into the theme of Psalm A transient valley of shade lies between two lofty hills: But in company with the all-sufficient risen Saviour, we need have no fear of the journey from the cross to the crown.

Chapter 5 : A meditation on the Shepherd's Psalm "The Gentle Art of Blessing"

A meditation on the Shepherd's Psalm A simple meditation to start your day There is a brief text which is one of the most universal, ecumenical texts in the world spiritual literature.

The good shepherd is willing to give up his own life for the safety of the sheep. Unlike the hired hand - who in the face of a dangerous encounter, may very well leave the sheep defenseless in order to protect himself - the good shepherd will defend to the death each sheep in the flock. This message is quite visible simply in the reading of these verses. But we miss a major point here, because the selected lectionary reading omits this second point which Jesus was making. We have to back up and see both issues which Jesus addresses. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep, the gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and they hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all of his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers. God opens the gate, which allows the shepherd to go in and call out his sheep, who respond and follow the shepherd, because they know his voice, and they feel safe in his presence. And though the sheep also know the voice of the hired hand, in the presence of the Shepherd, his voice will be followed, and not that of the hired hand. In the absence of the shepherd, the hired hand becomes the voice of comfort to the sheep, but unless the hired hand also becomes like the shepherd, his voice will only lead the sheep when he himself is being led. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. The thief comes only for selfish intent, for selfish desires, for personal gain. Jesus comes that the sheep may have gain, and have gain in abundance. Jesus sacrificed himself for the safety of the sheep. He gave up his life that the sheep might find abundant life. He came to show us the way, to bring us the light, to tell us the Good news, and in the very act of doing this, he also became the way, and the light, and the good news. By him we are led into the sheepfold of God, from which we had strayed; and through him, we are reunited with the Eternal Shepherd, our God.

Chapter 6 : Meditation on "The Good Shepherd"

Meditations of a Shepherd by David T Demola starting at \$ Meditations of a Shepherd has 1 available editions to buy at Alibris.

The Good Shepherd When asked for their favorite Bible passage, most people name Psalm 23, which begins with the much-loved words: Abraham, the nomadic father of monotheistic faith, kept flocks of sheep. Jesus is identified both as the Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World. This meditation brings together Bible texts about shepherds, sheep lost and found , and sacrificial lambs with art works from my collection. My people hath been lost sheep: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulder and goes home. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He restoreth my soul: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: Psalm 23, KJV This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Chapter 7 : The Good Shepherd | Sacred Art Meditations

A Meditation on the Good Shepherd As you know, today, Friday, June 11, , the Pope concelebrated Mass on the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the conclusion of the Year for Priests. There were over 15, priests in St Peters Square.

Ignatius used to have a simple man who carried the modest baggage of his small group. During their journeys, this man would observe St. Ignatius and members of the Company of Jesus profoundly recollected in their long prayers. So he decided to offer to God those beautiful things he imagined they were saying. Watching them pray, he would simply make their prayers his prayer. Doing this, the simple man thus achieved the grace of elevated prayer. Shepherds come to adore the Christ Child, by Taddeo di Bartolo I once read a beautiful meditation on the Nativity that imagined one of the shepherds who came to adore Christ in a similar attitude. Imagine a poor shepherd, like the servant of St. Ignatius, distraught because he lacked the words to express the sentiments he felt. The shepherd saw the Divine Christ Child, so beautiful and amiable, and he discerned that this Child is Goodness itself. His forehead furled in wrinkles of concern. What could he say before the glory and grandeur of this Infant? And then a thought occurred to him, like a grace that God always gives to simple souls: They are so perfect, so far above me, and they love Him as no one can love him. By their countenances, I see they are immersed in divine mysteries that I cannot even imagine. Even though they are dressed simply, everything about them is noble and sublime, while everything about me is low and common, my body as well as my spirit. The pleasure that they give to You is the pleasure that I myself desire to give to You. Receive, then, those tender endearments and profound consideration that they are making to You as if they came from my own heart and mind. And almost without realizing it, his heart was overcome with tenderness for the God-Child. His soul, raised to the heights through Mary and Joseph, was filled with unknown lights and ardor. With one eye on the hidden God, the other eye on the two grand adorers, that simple soul was nourished incomparably by the incomparable Trio. A shepherd before the Christ Child The meditation then invited each one of us to apply the case to himself. At times when I am preoccupied and tired, or suffering from heavy weights and trials? Despite my distractions and inertia, here is a means to forget myself and draw near Him. I will contemplate Thee, O Virgin Mary, and you will open to me the unfathomable depths of your respect, your love, and your enthusiasm for Jesus. I will contemplate Thee, o Joseph, and the sentiments revealed on your countenance of such great purity, tenderness, and dedication, sentiments that I would like to have. In both your expressions and ways of being, I see complete abnegation of yourselves. Filled with admiration, I ask that your prayers become my prayers, that the pleasure you give the Child Jesus in your contemplation of him, I might also give Him. This was a meditation I heard some years ago, and it has remained with me. When I approach the Christmas crib and find myself empty, tired, discouraged at my own inadequacies, unable to find the spirit of the Christ Child because I am weighed down too much by the world and myself, I remember the humble prayer of the shepherd. He forgot himself, and looked to Joseph and Our Lady. Admiring them in contemplation before the God-Man, he entered into their spirit and invited Jesus to reign in his soul. It is not always the profound thoughts or original meditations that bring the soul to greater intimacy with the Christ Child. Sometimes a simple vantage point is the best one that gives the greatest benefits. Posted on December 19, Related Topics of Interest.

Chapter 8 : Day “ The Lord Is My Shepherd ” Meditation Monday - Wisdom-Trek ©

With the heart of a shepherd, Pastor Travis D. Smith This entry was posted in America, Church, Hillsdale Baptist Church, In the News and tagged Aid, hillsdale, Hurricane Michael, Panama City on October 16, by pastortravissmith.

There were over 15, priests in St Peters Square. It is thought that this is the largest number of priests who have ever concelebrated. Those parts of his speech can be commented on by others. Important that those sections of the speech may be, the Pope touched on many more topics in his homily. In all it is an important meditation on the role of the priesthood. Included in the homily there is an extended meditation by the Pope on Psalm The psalm is popular and well-known. Perhaps through over-familiarity we do not really appreciate its significance. The Pope attempted to remedy this in a homily which appeared to be ex tempore at times. The reading from the Book of Ezechiel begins with the same theme: God personally looks after me, after us, after all mankind. I am not abandoned, adrift in the universe and in a society which leaves me ever more lost and bewildered. God looks after me. He is not a distant God, for whom my life is worthless. But this God was distant. Evidently he had abandoned the world to other powers and forces, to other divinities. It was with these that one had to deal. The one God was good, yet aloof. He was not dangerous, nor was he very helpful. He did not lord it over us. Oddly, this kind of thinking re-emerged during the Enlightenment. There was still a recognition that the world presupposes a Creator. Yet this God, after making the world, had evidently withdrawn from it. The world itself had a certain set of laws by which it ran, and God did not, could not, intervene in them. God was only a remote cause. Many perhaps did not even want God to look after them. They did not want God to get in the way. It is fine and consoling to know that there is someone who loves me and looks after me. But it is far more important that there is a God who knows me, loves me and is concerned about me. The shepherd points out the right path to those entrusted to him. He goes before them and leads them. Let us put it differently: He teaches us the art of being a person. What must I do in order not to fall, not to squander my life in meaninglessness? How much darkness surrounds this question in our own day! We are constantly reminded of the words of Jesus, who felt compassion for the crowds because they were like a flock without a shepherd. Lord, have mercy on us too! Show us the way! From the Gospel we know this much: Living with Christ, following him “ this means finding the right way, so that our lives can be meaningful and so that one day we might say: The people of Israel continue to be grateful to God because in the Commandments he pointed out the way of life. The great Psalm is a unique expression of joy for this fact: God has shown us the way and how to walk aright. The message of the Commandments was synthesized in the life of Jesus and became a living model. Thus we understand that these rules from God are not chains, but the way which he is pointing out to us. We can be glad for them and rejoice that in Christ they stand before us as a lived reality. He himself has made us glad. By walking with Christ, we experience the joy of Revelation, and as priests we need to communicate to others our own joy at the fact that we have been shown the right way. Our path as individuals will one day lead us into the valley of the shadow of death, where no one can accompany us. Yet he will be there. Christ himself descended into the dark night of death. Even there he will not abandon us. Even there he will lead us. Truly you are there, even in the throes of death, and hence our Responsorial Psalm can say: When speaking of the darkest valley, we can also think of the dark valleys of temptation, discouragement and trial through which everyone has to pass. Even in these dark valleys of life he is there. Lord, in the darkness of temptation, at the hour of dusk when all light seems to have died away, show me that you are there. Help us priests, so that we can remain beside the persons entrusted to us in these dark nights. So that we can show them your own light. Along with the rod there is the staff which gives support and helps to make difficult crossings. The use of the rod can actually be a service of love. Today we can see that it has nothing to do with love when conduct unworthy of the priestly life is tolerated. Nor does it have to do with love if heresy is allowed to spread and the faith twisted and chipped away, as if it were something that we ourselves had invented. For us, who pray this Psalm with Christ and his Body which is the Church, this prospect of hope takes on even greater breadth and depth. How can we not rejoice that one day we will be guests at the very table of God and live in his dwelling-place? How can we not rejoice at the fact that he has

commanded us: Truly we can pray together, with all our heart, the words of the Psalm:

Chapter 9 : Meditation on Psalm The Lord Is My Shepherd | Truth & Tidings

The Lord is my Shepherd - Meditation Monday Thank you for joining us today for our five days per week wisdom and legacy building podcast. This is Day of our Trek, and it is time for.

He assures us, "I will never fail you nor forsake you. Since the need of the other is built into the very texture of his creation, absence of the other tears him apart. Such lonely moments are the lowest and most unbearable. Therefore the Lord God promises that He will be there to pick us up, to hold us close to Him and to bind up our wounds. Jesus spoke of the good shepherd going after the lost sheep. The ninety-nine faithful followers should be cared for leaving the strayed one to its fate. It is the crowd that is to be preferred over the individual. Perhaps this is the difference between a shepherd and the Good Shepherd. The shepherd or a leader is all the time concerned with schemes and projects for the welfare of the majority. He need not know the individual neither does he need to care for the lost and the wounded. The latter are counted as a liability and he would prefer to close his eyes to their plight. However Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me. He knows everyone of His followers and every single detail of their life. He said "even the hairs of your head are all numbered. He understands that the most painful experience for any person is to be isolated by others no matter what the reason for this may be. The Good Shepherd never judges the strayed sheep. He cannot abandon it to the disastrous fate it opted for. His heart beats for everyone in pain. His preferential option is for the rejects of society. In the Old Testament God chose a special race of people, intervened into their history and took them out of slavery with a mighty arm. The Israelites had a great sense of belongingness to God. In the covenant established with them the promise of God was, "You shall be my people, and I shall be your God. Jesus went about as the Divine Presence entering into the pain and sin of every individual. It is not the crowd that He cared for but the individuals who were most in need of Him. In the marketplace of Jericho, there was a crowd making noise exulting in His Presence. But the heart of Jesus picked up the cry of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus - "Son of David, have mercy on me! Jesus stepped aside from the crowd and reached out to him and asked him, "What do you want me to do for you? Everyone was trying to get a glimpse of Him or to make contact with Him. But the eyes of Jesus were in search of a man who was searching for Him. It did not matter that this man was sitting on top of a tree hidden from the crowd that was sure to ridicule him. Perceiving that it was this lonely man who was most in need of Him, Jesus called him down and went to his house to declare salvation - "Today salvation has come to this house" Luke

The curious crowd was left by the wayside. It was not the popularity of the crowds that Jesus was after. In fact when they saw that Jesus went with the tax collector, they all murmured against Jesus, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. Zacchaeus in the midst of his power and prosperity was a man isolated by his own people. The Jews considered him as a traitor because of his profession. He collected money from his own people and gave it to the Romans. Burdened by guilt, his lonely heart was searching for someone to accept him and save him. Jesus picked up the pain of his heartbeat. The Master did not condemn him, rather, He was moved by the grief of this outcast. Jesus risked His own reputation and life in this mission of salvation. As we are told, the Pharisees were scandalized at this saving event. In the midst of a crowd, a woman with a hemorrhage took courage to touch the hem of His garment Mark 5. She knew that because of her sickness, she was not allowed to come in the open. She was not permitted to touch a man. As she did so, so was she healed! The gospels tell us that power went out of Jesus to her. It is not those in the crowd vying with each other to make an impression on Jesus who felt that power of love. His divine power was reserved for the meek, the lonely and the downtrodden. The paralyzed man at Bethesda John 5 , the man with a withered arm in the synagogue Mark 3 , the lepers who were not allowed to come into human habitation Mark 1 " it was to these that He turned with His compassionate gaze. Jesus would assert that they were the purpose of His coming. Often we think of Him as the Almighty showering blessings on the just and the good, and curses and punishments on the erring. Such an idea of God may be useful as a basis for the moral welfare of humanity. Even today the world is scandalized by the figure of the Good Shepherd that Jesus offers Himself to us as. A young professional who came for retreat once confided in me, "I do not like myself. Since he came from a

good Catholic family, he knew that what he was doing was very wrong. He tried to overcome his evil habits but he never succeeded. In his adolescence he gave up trying altogether. God cannot approve of what I am doing because God being what He is has to be concerned about our moral standards. I cannot change myself. And He cannot accept the way I think and the way I live. God has to reject me. By then he rejected God and all forms of religion. He explained that he rejected God because God had rejected him already. He began to read secularist and atheistic books to build a reasonable foundation for his denial of God. Though not agreeing to the many thoughts shared during the talks here, he followed the retreat very attentively. At one moment the word of Jesus struck him - "I have come to seek and to save the lost. He came to talk to me and he posed the question, "Is perhaps God speaking to me? Am I presumptuous to consider that God would be concerned about me so much as to speak to me? Though you were not concerned about God, He was always and is concerned about you. Jesus knew him all the time and was knocking at the door of his heart, waiting to come in. I led him in a prayer to commit his life to the Lord. A new light shone upon him. A new joy filled his heart. Many a war was fought and much blood has been shed to usher in that Utopia or ideal existence. The approach of Jesus was different. It was not external systems and structures of society that He proposed to undo. It was not superficial transformation that he aimed at. He was challenging every man and woman for an inner transformation. His first proclamation to the people was to "Repent, the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. The urgent need was for man to turn to God in total surrender. When we commit our life to God, we rise above ourselves to reach out to others in need. And this attempt of man will be enabled and brought to fulfillment by the Holy Spirit. Even during the ministry of Jesus, there are a few mentions of how the people tried to make Jesus their king. After the Resurrection, the disciples were enthralled. Their hopes soared and when they came together they eagerly asked Jesus, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And in this healing, humanity shall be restored to the grand Kingdom of God. We cannot rely on the applause of the crowd, the intimacy of family, the success of our projects, or our many achievements to quench the vacuum inside our hearts. I remember a very enriching course I had participated in during the final year of my priestly formation. This course on family counseling was given by a British Anglican pastor and his wife. They were highly erudite but very simple people committed to the Lord. By the time we reached the end of the course, the ten of us who participated in the course and the couple had become very open to each other. The pastor asked us a very relevant question. What do you think would be the big challenge of your priestly ministry? And finally another participant jokingly said, "Pastor, you are married. Your wife is always with you to understand and care for you. At the end of the day you will always have someone to fall back on and to support you. We are Catholic priests and we will have no one to even call our own. He asked his wife, "We have been married for the last 25 years and we have made a good marriage.