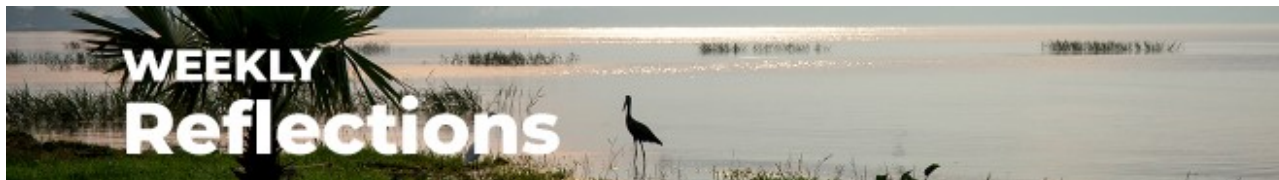


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Based on the gospel for Sunday 25 April - John 10:11-18

“I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep.”

This is a very familiar gospel, portrayed many times by artists. For children, the Good Shepherd is a comforting image of a lamb happily draped around Jesus’s shoulders. For adults the image encourages trust – following the path of Jesus will lead us to the eternal sheepfold of heaven.

In contrast is the hired shepherd who has no care for the flock when danger threatens. In life this is the false prophet, all talk and promise but suddenly absent when problems arise. The Good Shepherd shows us the way through these trials and comforts us on the journey.

This gospel also foretells Christ’s death. He lays down his life for everyone, even sheep who are not of his flock. This selflessness must be the mark of our following of Christ. As Christians of different denominations we are asked to be united heart and soul even if our way of worshipping is different. We listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd calling all flocks together.

Following him demands that we take care of the weak, vulnerable and marginalised in our world so that they are accepted and valued for themselves. Like Jesus, our love and acceptance are to be given freely and non-judgmentally. Our ear is always to be tuned to the voice of the Good Shepherd who leads us to new places and people and invites us to welcome all with open arms as he did.

Loving Lord, Good Shepherd,
 keep us always faithful to our commitment to love one another,
 especially those who are weak or excluded,
 so that through us they may experience the love and tenderness you feel for all.
 Amen.



Pray with Pope Francis

Use the ecumenical Christian prayer in *Fratelli Tutti* to reflect with us this week.

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This reflection and prayer were written by Sr Bridgetta Rooney, a CAFOD volunteer.



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