

### **Being A Good Shepherd**

Today we are celebrating “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Who is the good shepherd? Jesus. What makes him a good shepherd? I don’t know anything about sheep, but I think we can all agree that you don’t need to know much about sheep to figure out what makes a good shepherd. For example, a good shepherd feeds his sheep, he protects them from any danger, he takes care of the sick ones, he looks for the one that gets lost. Jesus meets all the qualifications of a good shepherd.

Today, because I don’t have too much time, I am going to talk about one of those qualifications. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, always took care of the most vulnerable in his flock. He loved all his sheep, but he showed special love and compassion toward the most vulnerable because they needed more attention.

So, who were these most vulnerable sheep in Jesus time? The outcasts. For example, prostitutes, people with sickness, lepers, people who didn't believe in the main religion, tax collectors, people that had diseases, and people that were unclean. An outcast is a person who is rejected or excluded from society or a system.

Let’s talk about who are the most vulnerable, the ones that are rejected, the ones that are suffering the most during this pandemic.

**The poor** – One of the groups that are suffering the most, and unfortunately is a big group, is the poor.

I saw a heartbreaking video of a milk truck in India that had gone by. It leaked milk into a street. A pack of dogs were lapping it up, and so was a poor man trying to scoop up handfuls of milk. In India there are hundreds of millions of people who literally will not eat if they miss one day of work. This happened after the Covid-19 lockdown.

**The Immigrants** – Undocumented immigrants are not included in the federal stimulus package, even if they pay taxes. Thanks to undocumented farm workers, we have food on our table. They, like so many other people, are risking their lives for you and I. Is this how we thank them?

**The disabled** – There has been reports that some people with disabilities are being put at the end of the line for care during this crisis.

**The elderly** – There are already reports that hospitals in Spain are refusing to treat people over age 65. In Italy, they are reportedly not treating them when over 60. “If you are above a certain age and we have a shortage of ventilators, you don’t get one,” said Cassie Sauer, CEO of the Washington State Hospital Association.

**The Asian and African Americans** – A study found that Asian and African Americans were more likely to experience at least one form of discrimination and unfair treatment due to other people thinking they might have the coronavirus, compared to other racial and ethnic groups.

**The LGBTQ Community** – Many members of the LGBTQ community continue to experience discrimination, unwelcoming attitudes, and lack of understanding from providers and staff in many health care settings. As a result, many are reluctant to seek medical care except in situations that feel urgent – and perhaps not even then.

So what can we do?

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Fr. Misael Avila / St. Frances of Rome, Riverbank, CA

Fr. Andrea Conocchia, pastor of this church in Italy, helped a group of prostitutes, many of them transgender, get in touch with the Papal almoner Cardinal Konrad Krajewsky. This cardinal who oversees the Pope's charity fund was able to help them.

Fr Conocchia said, "For me what was important was to remember that they are people, they are people with a life that deserves attention, listening, welcome, and they also deserve respect and recognition as human beings, The person is always a person, then comes the person's life ... first comes the noun, then the adjective,"

I think Jesus was a good shepherd because he was able to see all the outcasts of his time, simply as human beings that deserve respect. Let us follow his example. The worst virus is the lack of empathy and compassion.