

Some questions to talk about

1. Pope Francis said: Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. (272)
What do you understand by these words and how might you respond to them each day?
2. Pope Francis recommends: certain attitudes and attributes as critical for sharing the Good News: approachability, patience, dialogue, warmth and welcome which is non-judgemental. (165)
As you look back on your life this week, which of these are you aware of and which do you need to develop?

Take a moment to pray

Be still and know that you are in the presence of God.

We pray for everyone who is feeling lost today: for people who find no meaning to their lives, for people suffering from addiction, for those seeking happiness in destructive and unfulfilling ways, for those who feel isolated and insignificant.

We pray for everyone who is a follower of Jesus. We ask for His help to be like our Good Shepherd, to seek out those who are lost. May we be used as instruments to help them find their way home to Him.

**Loving Lord Jesus,
You are the source of Truth and Life.
Through the grace of our baptism,
and in response to your Word,
May we be compelled to respectfully
and joyfully reach out to everyone
we meet with compassion,
Always attentive to those in our
midst most in need of help.
Amen.**



Leaflet Three Jesus is alive – go and tell my brothers.

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Eric's Story



For years I'd walked past Our Lady's Church on the way to work. I wasn't a church-goer and neither were my family, so what did it mean to me? Until one day I was walking past and I saw a sign next to the door. I was not in a good place that day. I'd got involved with some people and situations that I was not very proud of. I felt really low and I didn't think anyone could help. As I walked past the church that day the new sign struck me – it just said: "For sinners only". I felt as though someone had put it there for me. I didn't do anything that day, I just carried on to work as usual, but something had changed in me. The next day the sign was still there so I tried the door and it was open. I went in. There was no one else in the church so I just sat down in the quiet – a few candles were flickering and I kept looking at them. After a while I left. The next day, and the day after, I did the same. On the fourth day, after I had sat for a while, the priest came over and said, "I've noticed you popping in – can I help?" I told him my story and felt a bit better, but that was it. I didn't go back and in fact my life got worse until one morning I decided not to get up. As I lay in bed I found myself saying to God, "I need to sort my life out." Within minutes the postman came and put a letter through the letter box. I wondered what it could be – so I got out of bed and found it was an invitation from the church to come along and learn what it meant to be a Catholic. I felt my prayer had been answered. The next Easter I was baptised, confirmed and made my Holy Communion. Life has not always been easy since, but I know there is a place for me in the heart of God – and it all started with a banner outside a building I had walked past for years!

The story above is true with some details changed to protect privacy.

Scripture: Luke 15:1-7

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."



Reflection

The joy of the Gospel is the joy of God. It is God's joy when someone finds their way back to Him, to His peace, to where they belong. Today many people can find themselves 'lost'. It's easy to get caught up in things that do us no good. We can get lost in a life that's about money and possessions. We can get lost in addictions, grief or isolation. At times life may seem to have little meaning or direction and we can become lost in bitterness or anger. Many of us can be lost without knowing the joy that meeting Jesus brings.

Sometimes as a Church we have devoted the majority of our efforts to looking after the ninety-nine sheep safe in the fold. Today the majority of those who might be described as 'lost sheep' are perhaps too often left to fend for themselves.

Can we be a Church, a parish, that is prepared to leave the safe confines of our buildings and seek out the lost sheep? We have a gift to share, the joy of knowing the love and mercy of God. So many of our brothers and sisters - family members, neighbours, work colleagues, acquaintances, the stranger - do not know and experience this gift in their lives.

Questions to ponder

What can we learn from Eric's story and from the scripture reflection?

**Have you ever lost your way in life?
What brought you back to God?**

Who do you think are the people the Good Shepherd is seeking out today?

From "The Joy of the Gospel" by Pope Francis

Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. (272)

All this demands on the part of the evangeliser certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental. (165)

