



Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent

Jesus said to his disciples: "What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

Introductory Prayer: Dear Jesus, my Lord and God, I open my heart to your infinite love. I wish to listen and respond to the inspirations that you wish to give me this morning. I believe in you. I hope in you. I love you. Lord, you are my shepherd and the true meaning of my life.

Petition: Jesus, Good Shepherd, give me the grace to open my heart to your mercy.

1. Not All Shepherds Are the Same: In today's society, the image of the shepherd doesn't say as much as it did in Jesus' time. Psalm 23 was probably one of Christ's favorite psalms, for he uses the image of the shepherd frequently: "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want." Sheep have a trusting relationship with their shepherd. Instinctively they know that the shepherd will care for them. Christ is our shepherd who loves us. In our lives, other people or material possessions can seem to promise to bring us happiness, causing us to follow after them as if they were our shepherd. But when the real trial comes, they abandon us just as a hired hand leaves the

sheep when the wolf appears. Let us renew our commitment to Christ, the Good Shepherd, since he is the true shepherd of our souls.

2. Searching Out the Lost Sheep: In every group of animals there is at least one that seems to get distracted and eventually lost. In our lives we, too, can get distracted and stray from the security of Christ and his way. Sin is what separates us from Christ. If we are not careful, we can be easily seduced by the world, by the fascination of material goods or pleasures, and then mistakenly place our security in them. Then, when we experience the emptiness and spiritual hunger that comes from wandering from the Good Shepherd, we need only to recall that he is waiting for us, his wayward sheep, to carry us back into the safety of his fold. It is comforting and heartening to know that he longs for us to be reconciled with him, just as a shepherd goes out in search of the lost sheep.

3. Let the Celebration Begin! Anyone who has children and has temporarily “lost” one of them can empathize with the joy God experiences when one of us is found once again and reunited with him. We may try to outdo him in love and generosity, but that cannot happen. His love surpasses all our imagining. Today, let us take a moment to talk to God about our state in life and resolve to let him be actively present in our everyday living. Could there be any better way to prepare for Christmas than to open the doors of our hearts? Christ is there, knocking, asking to be allowed inside so he can heal us and make us whole again. It's almost shocking to discover that we can please him simply by turning to him and letting him pick us up from where we've fallen and restore us to full friendship with him. Shouldn't we permit Our Lord that pleasure, especially when the only cost is admitting our tremendous need for him, confessing our sins and inviting him back into our hearts, where he belongs?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I know my countless falls provide me countless occasions to encounter you as the Good Shepherd, since without fail you come to pick me up again. Instead of wallowing in a sterile self-pity at the misery of my sinfulness, I intend to delight more in your tender mercy. I know this trusting attitude will please you.

Resolution: Each time I fall today, I will get back up again immediately, because I will have confidence in my Good Shepherd's loving mercy.