

Grace Notes *Friday, April 23, 2021* ¹



Dear friends:

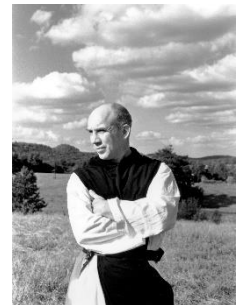
As I write this, it is now Saturday – again, and I can only beg your indulgence after a busy day yesterday and the call of the out-of-doors today.

I am pleased to say that we seem to have had a very successful Faith and Equity Day yesterday across the Board, as staff groups gathered to listen to Father Darren Dias, O.P., a Dominican priest who is a professor at the University of St Michael's College, break open the Papal Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, for us. After first explaining what an encyclical is and how the nature of encyclicals has changed over the centuries to become teaching instruments in our lifetime, he led us through a brief summary of the messages Pope Francis is sending us in the document.

It occurred to me that all three of Pope Francis' encyclicals with which we are familiar – *Laudato Si*, *Amoris Laetitia*, and *Fratelli Tutti* – are very much focused on love: love for creation, love for our families, and love for all of humanity; this is a very message for us and one which calls us all to reflect on how we are treating our world and its people. Father Richard Rohr, known to many of us as the source of a daily contemplation, writes: "Our work as spiritual seekers and

contemplatives is to see all of creation as woven together in holiness and to live this truth. In this loving act we begin to knit together that which has been torn; we gather all that has been scattered. Contemplative practice is a way to bring healing presence to the world. ." (© 2021 | Center for Action and Contemplation), reminding us that

Thomas Merton wrote over fifty years ago, "The monk here and now is supposed to be living the life of the new creation in which the right relation to all the rest of God's creatures is fully restored. Hence, Desert Father stories about tame lions and all that jazz. (Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love*) Perhaps a difference is that the message is no longer being addressed merely to the monk, but to all of us. St Paul tells us: "So faith, hope, and love remain, but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). And John's Gospel has been reminding us since Easter that, being created in the image and likeness of God, love is who we are called to be – to all God's creation.



¹ Sculpture - Triumph by Timothy P. Schmalz



This Sunday, we enjoy once again, the Good Shepherd discourse in which Jesus compares himself to the good shepherd who knows his sheep really well, loves them and lays down his life for them. The theme of these readings continues on Monday and Tuesday, impressing on us that this metaphor is a very important one. We are also told that Jesus has other sheep which do not belong to

this fold, interpreted by many scripture scholars to be an indication that we are to be inclusive of others not like ourselves. Although the 23rd psalm is not used as the response this week, it probably is the best-known psalm of the Psalter, telling us, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7O1nijBP7LE>

(Those familiar with the “Vicar of Dibley” will recognise this as the theme music!) That we use the term “Pastor” to refer to a priest in charge of a parish – and this form of address is used in many Christian churches – indicates how this metaphor

resounds with us. It is no accident that this is also “Vocations Sunday”. I am quite sure that I have shared in a previous GN – but worth repeating – some insights learned from an old shepherd that the sheep who stray are not usually the cute, little lambs; these don’t generally stray far from their mother ewes, and are well protected by them. The shepherd is most likely to have to search



for the old, stinky, cranky ram who wanders off and gets lost or caught up in a thorn bush or other obstacle – but search he does. We may find the image of Jesus



with a spotless little lamb on his shoulders, more appealing; however, it is far more likely to be the ram with a knotted, smelly coat full of burrs whom the shepherd is carrying home. Brother Robert Lentz, a Byzantine Franciscan who is very heavily involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue, pictures the Good Shepherd with a menacing old goat in his collection, “Christ in the Margins”!

I grew up with the paraphrase of Psalm 23 resounding in my ears as the “Crimond” arrangement; here is a beautiful rendition of this piece:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=294nLmDSZKA>

Wishing you a beautiful Sabbath and week to follow,

Gillian