

# Voice of the Faithful



## Advent Prayer Reflection

Voice of the Faithful has been inspired by our need for greater protection of our children. One of the things we have learned along the way is that for many people, children are invisible. Maria Montessori was similarly inspired and developed her program for helping children name their experience of God. The Catechesis is based on the conviction that children are in a relationship with God and that the Church can nourish that relationship. Anyone who has worked with children in the Catechesis will testify that the framework is life-giving and children's spiritual lives blossom as a result. As we enter the next year of our work in VOTF we seek the same kind nourishment that children are given through this framework.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd works to deepen the holy relationship between God and each human person. That relationship is rooted in Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Note: Community prayer should always involve three parts: gathering, listening, and responding.

**Gathering:** Catechesis of the Good Shepherd always opens in prayer. This gathers the community. One prayer is a response is below:

*All pray together first:*

Thank you God, for you.  
Thank you God, for me.  
Thank you God for the light.

*The leader prays:*

Thank you for coming into our hearts,  
because now we can pray to you inside us.

*Reader 1 adds:*

Yes, Jesus is really a great friend,  
and we will never be alone.

*Reader 2 adds:*

Thank you for making bread  
Thank you for the light.  
Jesus, you are a treasure.

*Reader 3 adds:*

Jesus gives a hand of love  
so that we can rise again.

(Pray by repeating until every person present has read once. If the group is too large for that pattern, divide the readings but make sure there is repetition as though in a chant.)

**Listening:** The foundation of the Catechesis is the peaceful enjoyment of God's presence. This foundation provides for the development of all other relationships and builds the child's center of gravity for life in the community and life for the Reign of God. The over-arching purpose of the Advent reflection is to nourish this peaceful enjoyment of God's presence in the manner of the children whose protection we are seeking. "Good Shepherds" are people who rest in this same enjoyment of God's presence profoundly aware of the need to protect children and to nourish their relationship with God. This focus on children also helps us to focus on the theft of childhood that is the result of sexual abuse. For the victims in our midst, we focus on the Good Shepherd as a way to rebuild their childlike experience of God's care because the wreckage of their inner lives might be healed with such a beginning.

Reading from John 10: 1- 19.

(After the reading, you may want to ask for a reflection about those who have been shepherds in your VOTF community. Who are those who have shepherded the community? Who are the people who nourish our lives with God especially that life that is always present as that still, inner voice of comfort, care and strength.)

**Responding:** Praying the Psalm with Prayers embedded in it

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want,  
*Lord, heal all of your children who have been violated. Bring healing to the ones who love them and who cannot fix the hurt.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

In verdant pastures God gives me repose;  
Beside restful waters God leads me;

*Lord, heal us, your Church. Make us green again so that we can be the place of running water for those in pain, for those who thirst for your presence and your peace.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

The Lord of Hope refreshes my soul,  
and I am guided in right paths  
in the name of the Living God.

*Lord, help Voice of the Faithful to be a loving community. Teach us how to rest in your love so that we may bring your love and peace to others, especially those who can help us protect our children and heal the abused.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil;

*Lord, help Voice of the Faithful to be a loving community. Teach us how to rest in your love so that we may bring your love and peace to others, especially those who can help us protect our children and heal the abused.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

for you are at my side  
With your rod and your staff  
that give me courage.

*Lord, make us people of your shepherd's staff. Help us find ways to bring our strength without threat, to bring courage gently, to seek change with love, to bring our good judgment without anger.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes;

*Lord, not all your Church has been converted. Give us the grace that converts those who do not yet see the victims of abuse, those who do not yet see our bleeding Church. Nourish us so that our work is grace-filled even in the face of denial and fear.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

You anoint my head with oil;

*Lord, make us people of healing. Shape us into the people who draw others to us and to our work.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me

*Lord, comfort us when our spirits are pierced by the stories of your broken children. Help us to feel your loving hands on us so that we might be those loving hands to the victims who suffer.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord  
for years to come.

*Lord, help us to recognize your presence in each breath we take. Help us rest in your Creation as in a nest of your making that surrounds us and gives us life.*

**We pray:** Lord, hear our prayer.

This prayer reflection has been provided by Voice of the Faithful. If you use this reflection please let us know how it went by contacting Angela at [ahope@votf.org](mailto:ahope@votf.org).

Voice of the Faithful is a worldwide movement of concerned mainstream Catholics formed in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis. The group's mission is to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the Faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. Its goals are to support survivors of clergy sexual abuse, support priests of integrity, and shape structural change within the Catholic Church in full accord and harmony with Church teaching. VOTF's supporting membership exceeds 35,000 registered persons from the 50 U.S. states and 37 other countries.

For more information about VOTF call the national office at 617-558-5252 or visit us online at [www.votf.org](http://www.votf.org).

