

Our Response to the Good Shepherd

by *The Faithful Disciple*

GROW: I really feel for teenagers these days. It seems that today's kids face – if not *more* challenges than I did – at least many more *ways* those challenges can present themselves. The usual adolescent pressures present themselves in person, as always, but also now on the many forms of social media. For young people, and all of us, living as “children of God” is certainly not for the faint of heart! As our Psalm today says, we should place our trust in God – take refuge in him – rather than in what others may think of us. Why? Because living as disciples of Jesus can fly in the face of cultural norms. After all, Jesus was the stone the builders rejected – who became the cornerstone! He and the apostles challenged the status quo and faced ridicule and rejection, and even death because of it. Still, they always did the right thing. That's hard, for sure. But Jesus, the Good Shepherd, laid down his life for us, and that requires a response. Discipleship calls us to serve others by doing the right thing so that God's kingdom will flourish.

GO: St. John told his community that “the reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.” The key to being a loving force for good in the world is humility, and looking to God, rather than how we are perceived on social media or the car we drive, for our identity and worth. Tackling our ego begins by taking stock of what we value but especially what God calls us to value. Once we have explored those troubled waters, we can absorb St. Teresa of Calcutta's advice: “Accept being slighted, forgotten and disliked. Be kind and gentle even under provocation.” Our slow steady witness shines light into darkness. The consistent challenge of our Christian behavior, offered without judgment, will promote God's values in our families, schools, work, and neighborhoods. Our faithful witness allows God to work. Remember, God uses the stones that are rejected to become the cornerstone.

PRAY: Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen you to live humbly. Then ask the Spirit to open the door for you to invite others to know the joy of living according to God's ways. In the meantime, pray the *Surrender Novena*. It will help train your disposition to seek God's approval only.