

**PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A)**

**2 – 3 MAY 2020**



**SUNDAY REFLECTION**

The essential communal dimension of Christianity, far from excluding individual personal responsibility, implies and demands it. It is only in so far as each 'soul', that is, each person within the community behaves appropriately that the whole community develops and thrives. The whole body is only as healthy as the totality of its members. As the First Reading reminds us, when we are confronted by the announcement of the Gospel – as we are at every Mass – each one of us has to undertake a change of heart, a profound interior, un-transferable conversion and be baptized in the name of Jesus, each of us having a personal name and being related personally to Jesus.

This close personal relationship with Jesus is expressed vividly in 1 Peter's image of following in Jesus' footprints. Of course, we all follow but do we do this as an anonymous group *en masse* or as a real community of interrelated persons, one at a time? The footprint image suggests that each one of us is to imitate Jesus exactly, reproducing precisely within ourselves His attitude in his suffering, and conforming ourselves to His behavior. The Gospel's metaphors of the door, the shepherd, the voice and hearing convey the same idea of individual, personal relationship in following Jesus. The door being comparatively narrow, the sheep enter and exit the fold not as a flock but singly, one by one. The sheep move having heard the shepherd's voice, which they can do only individually. Most significantly, the shepherd calls his own sheep by name, which implies a personal relationship based on intimate knowledge. The sheep's mode of following the shepherd complements that of our following in Jesus' footprints, being more interior and profound, based on knowing the shepherd's voice and allowing for more individual personal responsibility. Sheep do not walk in the shepherd's footprints.

Like the metaphor of the priceless lamb, that of the shepherd expresses immense love, the love of Jesus Himself which corresponds to that of God the Father. Jesus is both the lamb which is given and the shepherd who comes actively to serve. His death, sealing His life of loving care, is

not only a gift of the Father but also His own self-giving. His mission is to communicate abundant, transcendent life, which is nothing more or less than the divine life. Example, gate, shepherd, imitation and following are metaphors of constant guidance and leadership, on the one hand, and of continuous responsible involvement on the other, expressing how Jesus governs His church. Jesus leads by example, by facilitating, by calling, by showing His loving care. We are to follow by imitation, personal response and effort.

The flock is also an image of togetherness. We are all united as members of the flock whose shepherd is Jesus. It is His voice that we know and hear, He whom we follow on our faith journey. And we know Him only because He has known us first, because we already have, deep within our being, that voice which called us into existence and which regenerated us at our baptism. This is why we have 'returned' to 'the shepherd and guardian of our souls', that is, of our true selves, to the only one who can and does give us the fullness of life. The notion of life encapsulates everything of value in human existence. The purpose of Jesus' mission and our response is the fulfilment of our humanity, the completion of our being created in God's image and likeness

**STEWARDSHIP:** Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it to the full." Good stewards are grateful for the gift of life and joyfully share their abundance with others.

## **READINGS FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**10 MAY 2020**

**Acts 6:1-7:** The focus is on building the Church and working together to build God's kingdom.

**1 Pt. 2:4-9:** Peter tells God's people they are living stones, chosen by God and precious to God.

**Jn. 14:1-12:** Jesus gives His farewell address at His Last Supper with His disciples. He tells them that He will be with them only a little while longer and is going to prepare a place for them.

## **THANK YOU**

I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation for your response in two different circumstances.

First, your response to last week's collection for the local food banks as well as the Paper Drive for Seniors was phenomenal. The amount of food and paper goods was beyond anything that was anticipated despite COVID-19. Thank you so much for your generosity and spirit of community that you displayed .

Second, over the past six weeks you have showered me with your prayers, good wishes and Mass intentions following the surgery that I had the first week that we seriously entered into addressing the coronavirus. Many of you have also observed and were pleased that I seem to be recovering rapidly. And, thankfully I have in this first phase.

What is going on? First phase?

Past Events: You may remember in 2016 the left knee was replaced with an artificial knee. Things worked fine. Roughly a year / year and half ago the knee swelled up to twice the size of the right knee. The leg looked like I had a volley ball in the middle of its length and it hurt some. That is the reason that I have not been genuflecting and kneeling. It was not a personal statement against tradition. Finally it was agreed that something was not right, fluid was

withdrawn and cultured and behold there was a another bacterial infection concentrated around the artificial knee. Apparently bacterial infections seem to become lodged at the sites of these metal implants. The implant was removed, the area cleaned out and a spacer bar put in its place. The spacer bar is impregnated with an antibiotic to directly treat the area and it also keeps the femur separated from the fibula and tibia. It really makes some weird noises if I move the leg just right. For the past 6 weeks, three times a day I have been infusing an antibiotic through the PICC line in my shoulder. O joy.

As of the first of May this process has been completed, the blood counts seems to be good and it is time (hopefully) to move into the second phase. Which is a return to the surgery to have a new artificial knee implanted following which will be a second 6week period of therapy and exercises to strengthen the muscles in the leg and more to the point to restore normal maneuverability to the leg. Isn't it nice to know exactly what one will be doing throughout the summer?

One draw back, well at least the most worrisome is why have there been two different bacterial infections, one in the knee and one in the spine in less than eight months, and where did they originate? There is some concern about this on the part of the surgeons and of course yours truly.

I deeply appreciate the Masses and prayers you have offered on my behalf.

## **RENEWAL of the RE-CONSECRATION of the U.S. to the BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Yesterday afternoon the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops re-consecrated the country to the Virgin and last evening we repeated that ceremony at the Friday evening prayer service. What is this all about?

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S bishops, under the leadership of Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the USCCB consecrated the country to the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary yesterday May 1. This act of entrusting the nation to Our Lady coincides with similar initiatives carried out by the bishop's conference of Canada, which was also conducted on Friday, and the bishops' conferences of Latin America and the Caribbean and of Italy.

With the global effects of the coronavirus still uncertain, difficult and unprecedented challenges face us in virtually every aspect of life – current scientific analysis seems to indicate that we are unlikely to be rid of the disease anytime soon. Since it is inevitable that the Church will continue to be greatly affected by this virus, it is notable that the U.S. bishops have chosen to consecrate our land to Mary under the title of Mother of the Church. There is much that can be said about that title – especially given its increased popularity since Pope Francis added its memorial to the Roman calendar in 2018 – but it is fitting and timely considering what the Church now faces.

In announcing this re-consecration, Archbishop Gonzalez stated that “This will give the Church the occasion to pray for Our Lady's continued protection of the vulnerable, healing of the unwell, and wisdom for those who work to cure this terrible virus”. He went on to say that “This prayer entrusts the country to Mary, Mother of the Church, but does not change the

official patronage of the United States, which remains the Blessed Virgin Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception.”

The renewal of the consecration reaffirms and renews previous Marian entrustments and unites us in solidarity with our Holy Father Pope Francis, who recently established the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, as a source of protection and strength. Each year, the Church seeks the special intercession of the Mother of God during the month of May. According to the Archbishop: “This year, we seek the assistance of Our Lady all the more earnestly as we face together the effects of the global pandemic.”

Through a collective dedication or entrustment of a nation to Mary, an act of consecration is meant to be a reminder to the faithful of the Blessed Mother’s witness to the Gospel and to ask for her effective intercession before her Son on behalf of those in need. Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore, the first bishop of the United States, promoted devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, and placed the U.S. under her protection in a pastoral letter of 1792. This was renewed by the 21 bishops attending the Sixth Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1846 placing the country under the Virgin’s patronage with the title Immaculate Conception, and Pope Pius IX approved this decision the following year. In 1959, at the dedication of the Upper Church of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., Cardinal Patrick O’Boyle led America’s bishops in a renewal of the consecration. Archbishops and bishops in various places have consecrated to Mary their archdiocese and dioceses at various times and in different circumstances while Several popes have likewise consecrated the world to Mary on various occasions. This current consecration is significant because each bishop in America has been asked to personally renew our nation’s consecration to Mary on the same day.

**Renewal of the Consecration of the united States of America  
To the Blessed Virgin Mary**

*Most Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, you are the fairest fruit of God’ redeeming love.  
You sing of the Father’s mercy and accompany us with a mother’s love. In this time of  
pandemic, we come to you, our sign of sure hope and comfort.*

## **REFLECTIONS FOR WEEKDAYS OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF EASTER**

### **The Voice of the Shepherd**

#### ***Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter (Year A)***

*Note: In year A, when this Gospel is read on the previous Sunday, [John 10:11-18](#) is used today.*

“I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.” [John 10:11-13](#)

What are you most familiar with in life? What voice or voices echo in your mind most of the time? There are many influences we receive on a regular basis. Some are good and some are not so good. Often times we can talk ourselves into believing that the many “voices” or

influences that we encounter on a daily basis do not affect us. We are pressured by the voice of the media, pop culture, love of money, a desire for recognition and so much more. These are powerful influences and, whether we want to believe it or not, they do affect us.

The Gospel above gives us insight into this internal struggle in that it contrasts the voice of the Shepherd with the voice of a stranger. The sheep are easily taught and conditioned. They learn the voice of their shepherd because it was common practice for shepherds to regularly speak to their sheep. Once the sheep became used to the shepherd's voice, they would turn and follow him when he called.

So it is with us. We will follow the voice of that which we are most familiar. Whatever it is that we immerse ourselves in each and every day will grow on us and draw us, even unknowingly, to follow.

This begs the question, "What are you most familiar with?" Ideally, we spend sufficient time in God's Word, learning His language, tone and voice. Ideally, we dedicate some portion of our day, every day, to silent contemplation of God. As we do this, we build a habit of hearing Him speak and we become comfortable with and comforted by His voice.

Once this habit is established in us, it will be much easier to go about our busy day hearing God whenever He chooses to speak. We will immediately recognize it is Him and we will follow.

Reflect, today, upon that which calls to you the loudest. Don't let the many other voices in our world drown out God's voice. Instead, prepare yourself for the moments He chooses to speak. And when He does speak, let that voice grab your attention so that you can follow.

*Lord, help me to know and love Your gentle voice throughout my daily life. May that voice overwhelm all others that compete for my attention. I choose You, dear Lord, as my one Shepherd and guide. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **The Language of Jesus**

### ***Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Easter***

Jesus walked about in the temple area on the Portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you and you do not believe." [John 10:24-25](#)

This statement of Jesus may have left His followers confused. They wanted to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and so they asked Him to tell them plainly if He was the Messiah. And how did He respond? He tells them that He already told them and they failed to believe. This is an interesting situation.

The first thing to say about this is that Jesus was not being critical. He was helping them to understand His language. He was helping them to understand that the answer to their question was not a matter of Jesus simply telling them, "I am the Messiah!" Rather, the answer to their question had to come to them from the Father in Heaven, spoken to their hearts as they listened to Jesus and witnessed His miracles. The answer was to be given to them by the gift of faith that had to be received from within. This gift of faith would give them the certainty they so desired.

The same is true with us. Perhaps you've wanted God to come down from Heaven at times and tell you "plainly" the answer to this or that question. But He does not do that. He does it in His perfect way with His perfect language. It's the language of faith and it requires a complete

submission of our minds and wills to God to hear and understand. This is the only way to become converted in the way God wants us to be.

Reflect, today, how well you listen to God speak. You most likely can learn to listen to Him more clearly, discerning His voice of Truth. As you hear Him, let yourself become completely convinced of all that He says. And let that deep conviction rule your life.

*Lord, I so often do not let myself hear You plainly through the gift of faith. I so often want the easy answer to the difficult questions. Help me to grow in patience so that I may know You and allow You to become my true Shepherd. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Evangelizing Through Unity**

### ***Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Easter***

Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me." [John 12:44-45](#)

Now on a literal level, this is hard to comprehend. How is it that those who looked at Jesus were looking also at the Father? How is it that seeing Jesus was seeing the Father in Heaven? The answer is quite simple. The unity that the Father and the Son share is a perfect unity. They remain distinct Persons but they are also united as one. They are united in their perfect love and in the perfect communion of their wills.

For that reason, knowing Jesus is also knowing the Father. But the truth is that the Father's presence is veiled just as the divinity of the Son is veiled. Though we do not have the experience of seeing Jesus walk the Earth as the first disciples did, we find the same reality every time we come before the Holy Eucharist. When we enter a church and genuflect before the tabernacle, it's important to always be exceptionally cognizant of the fact that we are in the full divine presence of God the Son. And for that reason, we are also in the full and divine presence of the Father! Their presence is real and absolute. It's just that they are hidden from our five senses.

But one key thing to ponder here is the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Prayerfully reflecting upon their unity is a very healthy meditation for our prayer life. Why? Because we are called to share in their unity, and we are called to share in unity with one another.

Unity is hard. It takes a tremendous amount of love. It means being fully present to the other, seeking to fully understand, accept and know them. And the Trinity is our model for this. Be it parents and children, spouses, friends or others, we are called to a deep and abiding unity. Think about someone you know well. And think about someone that person knows well and loves. To a certain degree, you may feel you know that other person just by knowing the one who knows them. For example, say you have a very close friend who has a child and your friend shares much with you about their child. What you're experiencing is the unity of that parent and child in your relationship with your friend.

So it is with God. As we come to know God the Son, we automatically come to know God the Father. And the good news is that if we know God, and then let another get to know us, the effect is that we will be letting them come to know God through us. This is one of the wonderful ways to evangelize and bring God to those whom we know and love.

Reflect, today, upon your relationship with God and how that relationship shines through in all other relationships you have. Commit yourself more fully to knowing and loving God so that others around you may also benefit from your love of Him.

*Lord, help me to come to know and love You and, in that relationship, to come to know and love the Father and the Holy Spirit. And as I grow in love for You Most Holy Trinity, help me to bring that love into every relationship I have so that I may be an instrument of Your love to others. Most Holy Trinity, I trust in You.*

## **Slaves of Christ**

### ***Thursday of the Fourth Week of Easter***

When Jesus had washed the disciples' feet, he said to them: "Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him." [John 13:16](#)

If we read between the lines we can hear Jesus telling us two things. First, that it's good to see ourselves as slaves and messengers of God, and second, that we are to always give the glory to God. These are important points to live in the spiritual life. Let's look at both.

Normally, the idea of being a "slave" is not all that desirable. We are not as familiar with slavery in our day and age, but it is real and has caused extreme damage throughout the history of our world in many cultures and at many times. The worst part about slavery is the cruelty with which the slaves are treated. They are treated as objects and property which is completely contrary to their human dignity.

But imagine the scenario where a person is a slave to one who loves him perfectly and has as his primary mission to help that "slave" realize his true potential and fulfillment in life. In this case, the master would "command" the slave to embrace love and happiness and would never violate his human dignity.

This is the way it is with God. We should never fear the idea of being a slave of God. Though this language may carry baggage from abuses of human dignity of the past, slavery to God should be our goal. Why? Because God is the one we should want as our master. In fact, we should desire God as our master even more than we desire to be our own master. God will treat us better than we treat ourselves! He will dictate to us a perfect life of holiness and happiness and we will be humbly submissive to His divine will. And what's more, He will give us the necessary means to achieve all that He dictates to us if we let Him. Being a "slave of God" is a good thing and should be our goal in life.

As we grow in our ability to let God take control of our life, we must also regularly enter into an attitude of thanks and praise of God for all that He does in us. We must point all the glory to Him for letting us share in His mission and for being sent by Him to fulfill His will. He is greater in every way, but He also wants us to share in that greatness and glory. So, the good news is that when we glorify and thank God for all He does in us and for all the dictates of His law and His commands, we will be elevated by God to participate in and share in His glory! This is one fruit of the Christian life that blesses us beyond what we could ever come up with ourselves. Reflect, today, upon letting yourself become a complete slave of God and His will today. That commitment will start you down a path of tremendous delight.

*Lord, I submit myself to Your every command. May Your will be done in me and only Your will. I choose You as my Master in all things and trust in Your perfect love for me. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Our Father's House**

### ***Friday of the Fourth Week of Easter***

"In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." [John 14:2-3](#)

From time to time it's important that we focus in on the glorious reality of Heaven! Heaven is real and, God willing, one day we will all be united there with our Triune God. If we properly understood Heaven, we'd long for it with a deep and burning love and we'd look forward to it with a powerful desire, being filled with peace and joy every time we think of it.

Unfortunately, however, the thought of leaving this Earth and meeting our Maker is a frightening thought for some. Perhaps it's the fear of the unknown, the realization that we will leave our loved ones behind, or possibly even a fear that Heaven will not be our final resting place.

As Christians, it's essential that we work at fostering a great love of Heaven by gaining a proper understanding of not only Heaven itself, but also the purpose of our lives on Earth. Heaven helps order our lives and helps us stay on the path that leads to this eternal beatitude.

In the passage above we are given a very consoling image of Heaven. It's the image of the "Father's house." This image is a good one to reflect upon because it reveals that Heaven is our home. Home is a safe place. It's a place where we can be ourselves, relax, be with loved ones, and feel as if we belong. We are God's sons and daughters and He has decided that we belong there with Him.

Reflecting on this image of Heaven should also console those who have lost a loved one. The experience of saying goodbye, for now, is very difficult. And it should be difficult. The difficulty of losing a loved one reveals that there is true love in that relationship. And that is good. But God does want the feelings of loss to also be mingled with joy as we ponder the reality of our loved one being with the Father in His home for eternity. They are happier there than we will ever be able to imagine, and we will one day be called to share in that joy.

Reflect, today, upon this image of Heaven: our Father's House. Sit with that image and let God speak to you. As you do, let your heart be drawn to Heaven so that this desire will help to direct your actions here and now.

*Lord, I do long to be with You eternally in Heaven. I long to be comforted, consoled and filled with joy in Your home. Help me to always keep this as my goal in life and to grow, daily in a desire for this final resting place. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Speaking With Confidence**

### ***Saturday of the Fourth Week of Easter***

"The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own." [John 14:10](#)

These words from Jesus, once again, reveal the intimate unity He has with His Father. He and the Father are one and what He says also comes from the Father. John's Gospel is filled with this language as a way of highlighting their perfect unity.

Though there is much we could say about the unity of the Father and the Son, it's important to remind ourselves that these words spoken by Jesus should also ideally be words we

speak. How wonderful it is to be able to say that WE also do not speak on our own but that the Father speaks through us. This should be our constant goal.

If we speak words to others on our own, relying upon our own wisdom and insights, then we must also humbly admit that our words will not be that powerful. This is hard to admit but is true. We can easily fall into the trap of thinking our opinions are right and that others need to listen to us.

If, on the other hand, we are able to speak words that have the backing of the Father, words that are spoken from His heart, then we will begin to see that those words make a true difference in the lives of others. Words matter and we should always be very careful as to what we say and how we say it.

Allowing the Father to speak in and through us suddenly gives our words new conviction and power. They become words that God speaks to others and words that enable God to make a difference in their lives.

Reflect, today, upon your daily speech. If you struggle with not knowing what to say, or how to say it at times, then a good prayer to pray is for the grace to speak only that which the Father gives you to speak; nothing more and nothing less. Pray that prayer and be confident that God has a lot to say through you.

*Lord, give me Your words to speak. Help me to always turn to You in my heart in confidence so that You are the source of all truth and goodness. May that truth and goodness come forth from me each and every day. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **PRAYERS**

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,  
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.  
We fly to you today as your beloved children.  
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,  
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,  
and gain for our nation and world,  
and for all our families and loved ones,  
the protection of your holy angels,  
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

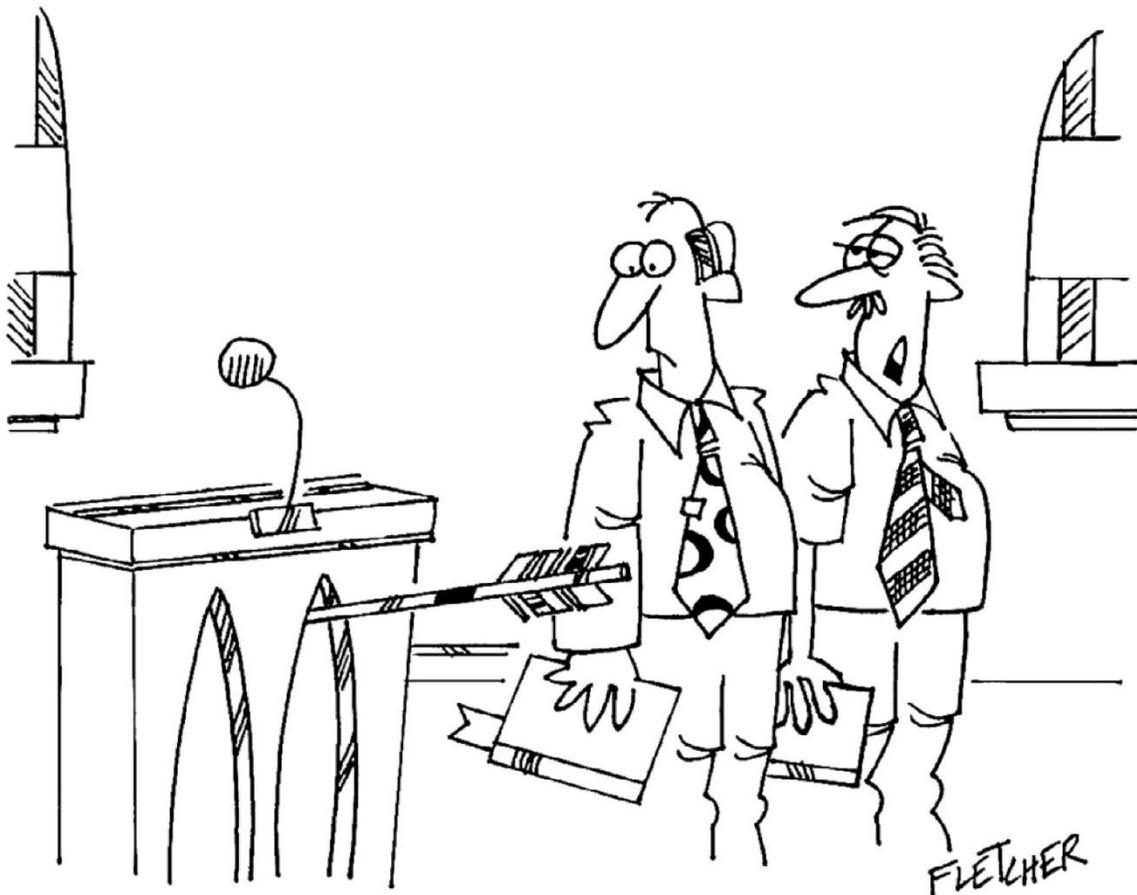
For those already afflicted,  
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.  
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,  
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,  
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.  
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,

knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,  
health of the sick and cause of our joy.

Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,  
keep us in the embrace of your arms,  
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen



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**“Why do you always obsess about the  
one negative response?”**