

# THE BACK OF THE BULLETIN

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## The Stone Which The Builders Rejected

There's a great distinction in our world between those who find themselves *wanted*, and those who are *found wanting*. I wonder how far this division is founded on truth. I hear politicians speak of "the unemployable", for instance, including among them able-bodied, genuine individuals who happen not to find a niche in the *economic* system. Is that rejection founded on any truth, or just a sign of the falsity of the world we inhabit? On the other hand, in this same weird world, we find people *making themselves necessary* - creating a market where there was none, and becoming very rich in the process. I learned the other day that Britons spend £3,000,000,000 a year on *pets*. In previous centuries pets lived on the edge of human society, literally on the scraps falling from the table. Some clever chap noticed the truth that pet food - in small tins double the price, offering prawns and herbs, turkey and ham, salmon and sauce - would make his fortune. Who, in 1938, would have believed it?

### True Shepherd

We call Jesus *Light of the World*; think of him as the contradictor of all the world's falsehoods. Think of the Resurrection as the Father's seal of acceptance on Jesus' firm reversal of the world's edicts. We can't doubt that Jesus sought out the lost sheep of this world, and when he was with them, knew he was where he ought to be. I think that we should seek to question our faint distaste for the allegory of the Good Shepherd. We don't respond all that well to being considered as sheep, so we keep the image at arm's length. Of course, we are much readier to see *others* as sheep: when we catch sight of the ones the world has *really* abandoned, we get quite emotional about shepherding. Show me a helpless child by a bomb crater and I'm crying out for a good shepherd. But not for myself, surely? Competent, self-reliant me, good at networking, running a system, making things happen? *I'm not your sheep*.

### The Sheep Hear His Voice

I think this needs contradicting. If I were less of a lost sheep, the world would be less in need of a shepherd. It's because I'm so far from reality, so ingrained and impregnated with falsehoods I can no longer smell, that I'm most lost, most in need of his coming to find me. How do we live in a world like

ours, with homelessness, loneliness, and poverty grinding down our neighbours, and still sleep sound in our duvets? *By being unreal, by living in a warped way that enables us to pretend it's not happening*. And who, in that world, will hear the good Shepherd's voice? That's easy: *the ones who know they're lost, of course*.

### The Need For Shepherds

"But they will not call on him unless they believe in him. And they will not believe in him unless they have heard of him. And they will not hear of him unless a herald comes to them. And a herald will not come unless he is sent..." Isn't it vital that we find people to point to the good, the true Shepherd? To set aside their own *ambition* and so gain the power to speak of the love of Christ? How, otherwise, can the world believe in real care, in genuine, wise, loving, sacrificial kindness that wants nothing except the good of the God-beloved world and all who live in it? There are, of course, lots of good things to be done in and for the world. The work of care is multitudinous and can be done in surprising places. But the only hope of reversing the tragedy of the world is in Christ; to make him known is therefore the most radical way in which we can care and help. Let's not just pray for vocations. Let's spread the feeling about the need for Christ's care in the world. Fr Philip