

**One day a funeral director phoned the parish priest and informed him that one of his parishioners had died. But the priest did not recognise the name, even though the deceased had been a regular attender on Sunday mornings for many years.**

**Fortunately, all the parish records were on the computer. Sure enough the man's name was there, followed by his age, address and other details about him. The priest was happy. Now he knew who the man was – but did he? We may know a number of facts about someone, but that doesn't mean we know them. The computer was a help, but it was no substitute for the personal touch.**

**When the Good Shepherd says he knows his sheep – he doesn't mean he has their name on the computer.**

**Jesus, the Good Shepherd, says "I know my sheep".**

**There are various levels of knowing. We know some people just as a face, or a name. Others we know as acquaintances, and others we know as friends. To know someone takes time and effort. When this knowledge is absent, a great loss results. Life passes by so quickly. We barely know each other. Knowing is particularly important for all those who care for others. To know their names is a good start – but to really know them is to know their life stories.**

**The kind of knowing we are talking about demands time, patience, and sacrifice. But it is rewarding. Once we know a person's story, our attitude towards them may soften. However, this knowing has to be a two-way affair. Jesus knew his sheep and they knew him.**

**“My own know me”, he said. Jesus was not afraid to let himself be known. But we sometimes are. If we refuse to let others into our lives, no-one will know what our true feelings, our needs, our hurts, and our hopes are. Perhaps it is the fear of rejection that holds us back. We fear that if people really knew us for the imperfect people we are, they would reject us. The result is that we will be known as the image we project rather than for the person we are. It would be sad to live and die, and never to have been deeply known – never to have told our story.**

**Jesus wants us to have a life here and a life hereafter. But it has to be that two-way affair. We have to respond to his love, as he commanded us “to love one another”. Those who love unselfishly and reach out to others become agents of Christ’s love – that love which is unfailing and unchanging.**

*(ref. Flor McCarthy SBD)*