

### THE SHEPHERDS WALKING STICK

The threat of war in the Middle East, bush fires in Australia, volcanic eruption in the Philippines and elsewhere, the epidemic scare due to the coronavirus from China, earthquake in the Caribbean, what a way to start the New Year! And then, of course, the media is still buzzing with the death of basketball star Kobe Bryant. This reminds us all of the fickleness of human life. We should always prepare for death! The best way to do that is to strive to remain always in the state of grace. And the best way to remain always in the state of grace is to go to Confession regularly. I myself go to Confession to a brother priest every month. Here in our parish, the schedule for Confession is every Saturday from 4:00 to 4:45 in the afternoon, just before the vigil Mass for Sunday. You may also call or message me at my mobile (204-823-8184) if you wish to go to Confession outside of the regular schedule..... I went cross country skiing and snowshoeing during the weekend. I enjoyed it a lot. Imagine, the snow which caused so much inconvenience a few days ago has become a source of so much joy! I think that well applies to all of life's crosses and challenges. They are harbingers of better days ahead or at least (most?) provide us with opportunities to make better persons of ourselves – resourceful, courageous, wiser, holier..... Not just a few among you have confided to me about loved ones who no longer practice the Catholic faith. Such situations are indeed lamentable. We should advise charitably, as occasion provides, these loved ones. Most of all, we should always pray for God to lead them home. Coincidentally (or did I say in one of my homilies that there are no coincidences?), I found this prayer on the internet. It's said to be originally published in a

manual of prayers in 1851: *O divine and adorable Savior, thou who art the way, the truth, and the life, I beseech thee to have mercy upon N., and bring him [or her] to the knowledge and love of thy truth. Thou, O Lord, knowest all his darkness, his weakness, and his doubts: have pity upon him, O merciful Savior; let the bright beams of thy eternal truth shine upon his mind; clear away the cloud of error and prejudice from before his eyes, and may he humbly submit to and embrace with his whole heart the teaching of thy Church. Oh, let not the soul for whom I pray be shut out from thy blessed fold! Unite him to thyself in the sacraments of thy love, and grant that, partaking of the blessings of thy grace in this life, he may come at last to the possession of those eternal rewards which thou hast promised to all those who believe in thee and who do thy will. Hear this my petition, O merciful Jesus, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, livest and reignest ever and ever. Amen.*