

## Reflection Wednesday Week 31 St Charles Borromeo 2020

St Charles Borromeo (1538 - 1584), a leading figure of the Catholic Reformation, was born in northern Italy to a powerful family related to the Medicis through his mother. As the 2<sup>nd</sup> son, he was destined for a career in the Church, received a doctorate in civil and canon law at Pavia University and, when his uncle was elected Pope Pius IV in 1559, he was summoned to Rome and made a cardinal. He became administrator of the vacant diocese of Milan and protector of the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, the Franciscans and the Carmelites. He helped re-open the Council of Trent in 1562 after a 10-year suspension. Later in 1562 Charles's elder brother died, leaving him as head of the family. His family wanted him to marry but, in 1563, he was secretly ordained a priest. Although consecrated Archbishop of Milan, the Pope would not let him leave Rome. He worked on the catechism, the Missal and the Breviary, and reformed his own diocese as well as he could from a distance. After Pius IV died, his successor permitted Charles to go to his diocese, 1566. In his reforms there he gave much of his property to the poor, set up the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine to teach children the faith. During a famine, he fed 3,000 people at his own expense for three months, inspiring others to do likewise. During the plague he visited the hospital that housed the worst cases. Throughout his life he faced much opposition including the King of Spain. Charles died on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1584, aged 46.

Like Jesus, Charles was truly a Good Shepherd who put his people before himself, cared especially for the poor and the sick with tenderness and love, rooted out injustice, corruption and the misuse of power in the Church. He was, as St Paul requested, *untiring in effort and earnest in spirit*, showing respect and reverence to all. In the words of the Psalmist, God said *"My truth and my love shall be with him; by my name his might shall be exalted!" And it was!*

**My friend was walking the dog when** someone approached him:

- What a beautiful dog! What breed is it?
- It's a German shepherd.
- Gorgeous! Does it have a name?
- **The Lord.**
- **The Lord?** Why would you call it that?!
- Because: ***The Lord is my shepherd!!***