

MAY 3, 2020

World Day of Prayer For Vocations

HOMILY

Today, in the Gospel, Jesus says, “...The sheep follow him because they know his voice.” Why do sheep follow a shepherd? I came across this modern day testimony of a real-life shepherd. He says of himself, the shepherd,

“The sheep always recognize the shepherds voice.
Even if others use the same calls,
the same words of the shepherd they will not listen.
They know their shepherd’s voice.

His voice is used to announce his presence to the sheep: I am here.
It brings comfort and security to the sheep. Or his voice calls them to
himself so they can be examined and counted carefully. He wants
to make sure that they are all well, fit, and flourishing.

Sometimes the voice is used to announce that fresh feed is being
supplied, or salt, minerals, or water. He might call them up to
lead them into fresh pastures or into some shelter from an
approaching storm. Always the master's voice conveys to the
sheep a positive assurance that he cares for them and is acting
in their best interests.”

In the Gospel, **Jesus says he is the Shepherd.** This title means, he is the owner of the sheep. He is referring to us as sheep. We are his flock. We follow him because we know his voice. How do we know it is Jesus’ voice calling us? Whatever brings peace to our souls, whatever drives away fear, whatever gives relief to our anxiety comes from the Good Shepherd: Jesus. Jesus’ Word to us is a sure and certain guarantee of his voice speaking to us. We know immediately it is him when we hear words like these from him in the Gospels,

“Come to me all you labour and are overburdened...and you will you find rest for your souls.”

We know it is him because these words bring peace, a peace the world cannot give us. And this peace comes because we have repented of our sins and received his Holy Spirit in our hearts. In our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, St Peter promised those who repented and were Baptized would receive two gifts: they would have their sins forgiven, and that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is by God the Holy Spirit we recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd.

Today Jesus also says, “I am the gate for the sheep”. This title refers to his leadership. In other words he is saying, as he said to Thomas, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* It is only through him that we are saved. The way to Jesus is Jesus' way not mankind's way! The way to Jesus is through the Church, the Church that has been established by Jesus Himself, the same Church that has handed down the apostolic tradition to us since the days of Saint Peter. The Church of Jesus encourages a living faith in the Christian family. Through such families, the grace of God is manifested and vocations flourish to ensure that the needs of the Church are all met.

Today is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Jesus’ Church tells us that this 4th Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday, is the day we are to reflect on the need for vocations. Without the vocations of bishop, priest, deacon, and religious men and women there is no one dedicated to proclaiming Jesus. Without these vocations there are no sacraments in the Church, no one to teach them to us; no Shepherds to guide us.

Today the Good Shepherd, Jesus, through his Church, reminds us that the entire Christian community shares the responsibility for encouraging vocations. Or as St Paul puts it elsewhere, *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how are they to call on one in*

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whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim Him? How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Vocations are born in the Christian family. This birth of a vocation is not by accident but by a deliberate decision on the part of church and family. How? First of all, prayer is necessary; the faith community must continuously pray for vocations, day and night. Second, the responsibility of the Christian family must be to promote vocations, and to do this the family must cultivate the Christian life: it is not enough to go to mass on Sunday, the family must pray together the Rosary, pray the grace at mealtimes. Third, parents must expect, respect and encourage the religious life in their sons and daughters. Finally, to grow vocations, parents must expose their children, including their teenagers, to the religious life; they must insist on them attending Mass on Sunday as they insist on them doing their homework, doing the dishes, cleaning their rooms.

So, let us remember our obligation to give birth to vocations in our homes. Let us also remember that Jesus said in John's Gospel, *"Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour."* In effect, the family that blesses the Church with a vocation will be honoured by him today and eternally.

And to the young women and young men considering God's call to them Jesus says, *"Follow me and I will make you fishers of people!"* Saving souls is what he is inviting them to help him do. Those souls who come to eternal life through them will be their crown of joy in eternal life.

Jesus needs young men and women to be his Shepherds to each new generation.

"Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send labours into the harvest."—Jesus.



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PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Leader:

Just as we know the voice of the Good Shepherd,
we trust that God knows our voices and responds to our prayers.

LECTOR: Risen Lord, Hear Our Prayer

For your shepherds especially the pope, our bishops and pastors,
and all who lead us in faith:

We pray...

Bring justice and peace to nations and people affected by violence:

We pray...

Bless your Church with young men and women eager to proclaim
your Kingdom to the world.

We pray...

Let your children who have wandered far from the sheep-fold
hear the voice of the Good Shepherd:

We pray...

Continue to protect frontline workers: especially our health care workers
and first responders; protect also all who are unable to stay at home but
must work to provide for their families:

We pray...

Risen Christ visit the sick with healing power and new hope:
(especially) Candelabra Ferolino; Munchie Reyes; Aisha Miranda;
Rodolfo Macapagal; _____

We pray...

Bless all who have died in your Christ (especially): those who have died
from the virus; and also, Fr Juan Torres; Edward Rabbat; Alejandro Canonigo;

We pray...

In our silence now, let the light of your presence shine in us (PAUSE):

We Pray...

Leader:

Loving God,
hear the prayer of your people.
Often we go astray, like sheep without a shepherd.
Call us back to you through the words of your Son,
the Good Shepherd,
who shows us the way to eternal life with you.
We ask this in his name, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS

First reading

Acts 2:14,36-41 ©

'God has made him both Lord and Christ'

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in a loud voice: 'The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.'

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'What must we do, brothers?' 'You must repent,' Peter answered 'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.' He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation.' They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 22(23)

Second reading

1 Peter 2:20-25 ©

You have come back to the shepherd of your souls

The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing punishment patiently when you are punished after doing your duty.

This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Gospel Acclamation

Jn10:14

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;

I know my own sheep and my own know me.

Alleluia!

Gospel

John 10:1-10 ©

I am the gate of the sheepfold

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Jesus said:

'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly,

I am the gate of the sheepfold.

All others who have come

are thieves and brigands;

but the sheep took no notice of them.

I am the gate.

Anyone who enters through me will be safe:

he will go freely in and out

and be sure of finding pasture.

The thief comes

only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come

so that they may have life and have it to the full.'