

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter - A  
Acts 2:14a, 36-41;  
I Peter 2:20b-25;  
John 10:1-10  
Little Flower - 5/11/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all mothers a very happy Mothers' Day.

Today is often referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday. The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is one of the most popular images of Jesus. However, in today's Gospel, Jesus does not directly refer to himself as the Good Shepherd but as the gate for the sheep. At the same time, in today's second reading, St. Peter refers to Jesus as shepherd.

Besides being Shepherd-King, Jesus is also Prophet or Teacher and Priest-Healer-Reconciler-Sanctifier. Through baptism and confirmation, we share in all three ministries of Jesus.

Jesus' and the Church's prophetic or teaching ministry is evident in today's reading from Acts of the Apostles. Peter proclaimed that God had made the Jesus whom they had crucified Lord and Christ. In response, his listeners asked Peter what they needed to do. Peter answered, "*Repent and be baptized...and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" Three thousand people were baptized that day.

Today's reading from First Peter proclaims Jesus Priest-Healer-Reconciler-Sanctifier. "*He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.*" Jesus himself said it more simply, "*I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.*"

As I mentioned, in today's Gospel and second reading, we have the image of Jesus as the shepherd or servant leader of his people. Although Jesus refers to himself directly as the gate, he also suggests that he is also the shepherd when he says that the sheep follow the shepherd because they recognize his voice.

We could not find better readings for Mothers' Day. We often refer to the family as the domestic or house Church. When we bless the parents at infant baptisms, we say that parents are "the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith" and pray that they will also be the "best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do" [Rite of Baptism for One Child, #70]. In reality, parents are the first teachers of their children in every area of their lives, but especially in the area of faith.

Parents also carry on Jesus' ministry as Priest-Healer-Reconciler-Sanctifier. As Jesus sacrificed himself for us on the cross, good parents sacrifice so much for their children. When I think of my parents, that is what I think of most: their willingness to sacrifice for my brother and me. Mothers especially are the healers of their children's hurts. Also, they are often the peacemakers in the family. Good parents sanctify their family by the witness of their faith, love, and hope.

Finally, parents are called to be servant leaders within their family. They accept responsibility for their family. They have to make hard decisions for the good of their family and the good of their children. They have to lead their children to learn the life skills that will enable their children to establish and lead their own families and also learn to make choices that will enable them to develop their God-given gifts for the service of God and others. Parents have to model good stewardship so that their children will become good stewards.

My brothers and sisters, although all of us share in Jesus' threefold ministry as Prophet, Priest, and Shepherd, parents assume a special responsibility for that ministry. Today is a day to be grateful for our parents, especially our mothers. Since there are no perfect parents, please remember that most parents do the best they can. Once again, happy Mothers' Day to all mothers and to all those who generously assume the role of mother in our lives.