

4th Sunday of Easter - B
Acts 4:8-12;
I John 3:1-2;
John 10:11-18
Little Flower - 4/22/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is often called Good Shepherd Sunday. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows and loves his sheep and lays down his life for them.

Today is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. When I was growing up, when Catholics talked about vocations, they were only talking about vocations to the priesthood or religious life. That changed with the Second Vatican Council. The Council talked about the universal call or vocation to holiness. On Monday, April 9, the Vatican released *Rejoice and Be Glad*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the call to holiness in today's world.

God calls every Christian to be holy. To become holy is to grow into the likeness of the Risen Christ, i.e., to become the-best-version-of-ourselves, as John proclaimed in today's second reading: *"Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."*

However, because God calls each of us by name, God's call to holiness is not generic. The call to holiness is embedded in every choice which we face from our state of life to our job or career and even to all the everyday choices of our daily lives. One of the most important choices we make is the choice of our state of life: lay, married or single, priest, or religious.

In his message for this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Francis wrote about the need to listen, discern, and live our call. For example, many people believe that if God is calling someone to priesthood or religious life, the call will be dramatic. Pope Francis, however, wrote,

The Lord's call...is not as clear-cut as any of those things we can hear, see or touch in our daily experience. God comes silently and discreetly, without imposing on our freedom... We need, then, to learn how to listen carefully to his word and the story of his life, but also to be attentive to the details of our own daily lives, in order to learn how to view things with the eyes of faith, and to keep ourselves open to the surprises of the Spirit.

Listening with an open heart, young people are called to discern "where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on his mission." Today with all the choices available, young men and women struggle to figure out what they want to do with their lives. This is especially true when it comes to career. I would suggest instead of asking, "What do I want to do with my life?" which includes both state of life and career choices, we would do better to ask, "What does God want me to do with my life? To what is God calling me?" I believe that if we prayerfully ask ourselves these two questions, we will feel a lot less stress and pressure and find it much easier to make our choices.

Finally, having listened and discerned, we are called to live out our call to be Christ's witnesses in the world right here, right now. Even when we are discerning or preparing for a state of life or a career, we are called to live life fully as witnesses to the power of Christ's resurrection in our lives even now.

My brothers and sisters, on this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I would invite you to pray for all young people who are discerning God's call in their life but especially that they will be open to God's call to become priests or religious. I would also encourage you to invite a young man or young woman to consider priesthood or religious life. So many young priests and religious say that they never considered priesthood or religious life until someone gently invited them to consider it.