

4th Sunday of Easter - B
Acts 4:8-12;
I John 3:1-2;
John 10:11-18
Little Flower - 4/25/21

My Brothers and Sisters,

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is called Good Shepherd Sunday because the Gospel on this Sunday is always a Gospel passage referring to Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Today is also the 58th World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

In today's Gospel, Jesus proclaims, "*I am the good shepherd.*" The rest of the passage suggests three qualities of the Good Shepherd. "*I know mine and mine know me.*" Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has an intimate relationship with us. We know this because Jesus immediately added, "*just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.*" All the recent Popes have taught the importance of a personal, intimate relationship with Christ. Because the Church is the Body of Christ, this passage also suggests that the Church is called to be a community of intimacy.

"*A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep....I will lay down my life for the sheep.*" As we know from his death on the cross, Jesus' love for us was a sacrificial love. Dying on the cross, Jesus offered his life to God for us, joining love for God and love for us perfectly in one act. All authentic love is sacrificial. Of course, most authentic love does not require us to physically die for someone. However, it does require us to be self-revealing, self-giving, and self-sacrificing. Authentic love does require us to die to self and to live for God and others. Because the Church is the Body of Christ, the Church is called to be a community of service as Jesus made clear at the Last Supper when he washed the feet of his disciples.

"*I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd.*" A major part of Jesus' mission was to evangelize, to proclaim the Good News of God's love to all creation. Because the Church is the Body of Christ, the Church is called to be a community of mission. We are called to look outward. According to Pope Francis, we are called to go out to the margins and to the marginalized.

Today's reading from Acts offers us an insight into how to proclaim the Gospel. In the previous chapter of Acts, Peter and John cured a crippled man. This provided them with a starting point to proclaim the Gospel, which in turn led them to being arrested. If we want to proclaim the Gospel, we have to live the Gospel concretely. Although our actions and our lifestyle speak for themselves, our lifestyle and our actions often give us opportunities to share our faith with others.

Today's reading from the First Letter of St. John shows us God's plan of salvation. Out of superabundant love for us, God sent his Son into the world to live among us as one of us so that we might become sons and daughters of God. However, this reading reminds us of our eternal destiny when "*we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*" Therefore, during our life on earth, we are called to live as sons and daughters of God and, therefore, brothers and sisters of one another and to grow into the likeness of the Risen Christ by striving to always become a better-version-of ourselves.

My brothers and sisters, on Good Shepherd Sunday, priests are always encouraged to talk about their own vocation. As most of you know, from the time I was six years old and in first grade, I wanted to become a priest. After attending Little Flower parish and school, where I was greatly influenced by the priests and sisters, I attended Latin School, St. Meinrad, and the North American College in Rome with my classmate and friend, Fr. Jim Farrell. St. Pope Paul VI ordained us to the priesthood on June 29, 1975. We will have been ordained 46 years this year!

I once was asked for my vision of priesthood. I wrote something like this. "I believe that God is love and, therefore, that my vocation as a priest is to make 'Christ's love visibly, tangibly humanly and personally present' in the lives of others through the ministries of Word, Sacrament, and Service."