



World Day of Prayer for Vocations

Homily Notes: Good Shepherd Sunday

Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 7/8, 2022

The fourth Sunday of Easter traditionally remembers Jesus, the Good Shepherd. In today's brief but powerful gospel passage, Jesus speaks about himself as our shepherd. His words speak about us who belong to him and about his enduring promise to us: *My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.*

"My sheep hear my voice": those words evoke the lyrics of an old hymn by Horatius Bonar:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's light,
Look unto me; your morn shall rise
and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun,
and in that light of life I'll walk
till trav'ling days are done.*

Each one of us can say that we have heard the voice of Jesus speak to us. That voice of the Good Shepherd with its message and promise of forgiveness and new life came to us in different ways. Perhaps the voice of Jesus came to us through our mother – whom we honor today on Mother's Day – or our father, or perhaps a teacher. In a special way, many of us can recall hearing the voice of Jesus speak to us through a priest in our parish or through a religious sister who served in the parish or a school or hospital or a deacon who served as deacons do in so many ways in the Church.

[At this point, the preacher may want to share a bit of personal history and identify a time when he "heard the voice of Jesus say" through an ordained or religious person serving in the Church. It would be important to note the impact of that voice on his life.]

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, never leaves his Church unattended. He uses the voices of people in the family of faith to be his voice today, to share the great promise that makes all the difference in our lives: "I give my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand." In a particular way, he uses the voices of priests,

religious women and men, and deacons to care for those who belong to his flock.

[At this point, the preacher may want to share some witness to his vocational story, especially identifying how he wanted to care for the flock of Jesus and be a voice of hope and promise .]

Our Holy Father Pope Francis has declared this Good Shepherd Sunday to be a World Day of Prayer for Vocations – for all vocations in the Church but in a particular way for vocations to the ordained ministry of priesthood and diaconate and to the consecrated life of religious women and men. What does this mean for us?

Obviously, if it is a World Day of Prayer for Vocations, we are called to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers into the fields to bring to him a holy and dedicated people. And we pray that prayer here and now in this celebration of the Eucharist.

We also reflect on our responsibility – a responsibility that belongs to each and every member of the Church – to foster vocations. We allow ourselves to be the voice of Jesus calling men and women to a dedicated life of service, to be the presence of the Good Shepherd in our world that is so much in need of him. **[Here, it is possible to spell out the needs of our world that bring us to the Good Shepherd. This may be the context of illness, broken relationships, the scourge of war and violence, and the lack of justice, peace, and respect for life.]**

Finally, we thank God for calling each one of us. We thank him, because, indeed, we have heard the voice of Jesus who summons us to follow him and to serve our brothers and sisters. We appreciate our own vocation, and rededicate ourselves to it.

In a short time, we will once again meet Jesus, our Good Shepherd, across this altar in our Eucharistic celebration. He is the Shepherd whose voice we hear: "This is my body, this is my blood." We will hear his promise: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand." And together we will sing "Amen," yes, we believe.