

Easter - 4th Sunday

- I find it interesting, that on what has been traditionally called Good Shepherd Sunday...
 - The Church has ***not*** chosen the passage where Christ applies that title to Himself.
 - He calls Himself the Good Shepherd...
 - but only in the verse that immediately follows our Gospel today.
 - But He does call Himself “*the gate*”
 - So we know that this title is important.
 - He is the gate that keeps us safe from thieves and robbers.
 - And...as the gate...He’s also the only way that we...the sheep...can enter in.
- As I sat with that image - of sheep going in and out through the gate, through Jesus,
 - the Lord took me to a scene from a movie I haven’t seen in years:
 - Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
 - Indy is going into a cavern in search of the Holy Grail...
 - and there are all of these security measures in place to keep it safe.
 - But of course...Indy has a few clues to get around them.
 - And the specific clue that the Lord brought to mind was this:
 - “*Only the penitent man shall pass*”
 - If you remember that scene, you know that...
 - in true Hollywood fashion...
 - Indy figures out the clue and...at the last second...drops to his knees...
 - narrowly avoiding this big saw that would have taken his head!
 - And so “*only the penitent man [did] pass*” - he made it through!
- Isn’t that clue also true of Jesus...THE Gate...the only way to pass over into Eternal life?
 - Unlike the Hollywood version...for us...
 - this falling to our knees...is not enough.
 - It must also include a good confession of our sin.
- And that’s something that poses a problem for all of us.
 - But in a couple of different ways.
 - And we usually waver back and forth between them over our life.
- For some of us...or at certain times in our life...
 - the knowledge of our sinfulness...
 - actually prevents us from approaching the Lord.
 - We think that our sins are just too big.
 - God could never love me!
 - Not after what I've done.
 - But that’s actually a form of pride.
 - Do you really think your sins are bigger than God Himself?
 - Is your sin bigger than His mercy and love?
 - If this is your struggle...or when this is your struggle...
 - then you focus too much on your fallen self.

- For others...or at certain other times in our lives...
 - just the act of thinking about our personal sin...
 - it seems like we're attacking ourselves.
 - And Jesus would never want that would He?
 - He's love after all...
 - He died for my sin...
 - So we don't even need to think about that do we?
 - If this is you...or when this is you...
 - you're actually too focused on yourself as well...
 - but on the self you are called to be in heaven.
 - We're not there yet...and we all know it...
 - so we get a bit stuck in our spiritual lives at this point.
 - Maybe we'll work on a little self improvement...
 - maybe we'll bulk up on our prayer life...
 - or our corporal works of mercy...taking care of the poor...
 - but we'll never look at our sin.
 - And what an incredible poverty that is for us!
 - because that's where the love of Jesus...our Savior...
 - most desires to work!
 - We miss out completely...
 - on some of the deepest and most profound graces...
 - that the Lord wants to work in our life.
- In reality...both of these visions of our self are needed.
 - We need to see our sinfulness...
 - and we need to see where we're headed for the sake of hope...
 - but in between these two...
 - we need to stop looking at ourselves...
 - and instead look on the Lord.
 - He alone can see us as we truly are.
 - He is the only One who can protect us from these thieves and robbers that come from our fallen hearts.
 - Our first reading today shows what that encounter should look like.
 - When confronted with the reality of their sins...
 - they weren't afraid to look at them...
 - nor were they afraid to keep moving towards the Lord and His love.
 - They repented...they were baptized...and their lives were never the same.
- My brothers and sisters,
 - whether we think that...
 - we cannot be saved...
 - or that we don't need to be saved any more...
 - we need the Good Shepherd...
 - to lead us away from these dangers...
 - and to focus our lives back on Him.

- And all of this is good to keep in mind...
 - before we have the possibility of receiving Jesus in Holy Communion once again.
- Confessions continue to take place at the normal times.
 - If you didn't get a chance to come during Lent...
 - or it's been a while...
 - before you once again approach the Lord in the Eucharist...
 - now is the perfect time to take advantage of the grace of Confession...
 - such that when you do receive the Lord in the Eucharist...
 - nothing will stand in the way of all the grace, strength, and power ...
 - that the Lord wants to give in that sacrament.
 - We need more of God's grace in our lives right now don't we?
 - We need to be more firmly rooted in Him and the truth of His love...
 - as chaos continues to swirl in our world.
 - So come first to confession...
 - and let the Lord make more room for that grace in your heart.
- As I mentioned last week...
 - public Masses will hopefully be resuming once again very soon.
 - We will be limited in the amount of people who can come...
 - most likely to only 10 people...
 - And Sarah Rogers is going to be organizing the effort...
 - so that everyone gets a chance to come.
 - Stay tuned for more info from her in the next few days.
 - We are expecting more details from the Archdiocese on Monday...
 - and then we can move forward with the details of our own plans.
 - But we've already been told that we can resume on Sat. May 9th.
 - We do still encourage those vulnerable adults to stay home when things open.
 - And we will continue to be dispensed from the Sunday obligation to attend Mass until there is a vaccine or this all passes.
 - But there is a huge difference in our not having to come...
 - And our missing out on the grace of that sacrament.
 - I believe it's so very important to fight for that grace!
 - If we've learned anything from this experience of our Church being closed...
 - it's that we can't take the availability of the sacraments for granted...
 - we now know just how fragile and precious that grace really is...
 - that they can be taken away at almost any moment.
 - And not just in Communist China!
 - It has happened all over the world!
 - So even with all the limitations, rules and regulations...
 - that will need to be in place with public Masses starting once again.
 - It will be worth fighting for that grace!

