

Easter - 4th Sunday

- Having just heard...
 - how Jesus describes himself...as the Good Shepherd...
 - it should come as no surprise...
 - that today we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday.
 - and also World Day of Prayer for Vocations
- The English word ‘vocation’ comes from the Latin ‘vocare’ meaning “to call.”
 - God calls everyone...to live a certain kind of life...
 - but that vocation...in general...
 - is actually the same for all of us.
 - Everyone has a call to holiness...something that flows from our baptism.
 - It’s a call to love God and others...as we make our way to heaven.
 - So we all have the same general vocational call...to be holy.
- And we all have a more specific vocation...that shapes...how we become holy.
 - Most are called to be married...
 - to raise a family...help populate heaven...
 - and bring the Gospel...into parts of the world...
 - that we priests and religious...simply cannot reach.
- But when we say that someone has a “vocation”...
 - in our language...don’t we usually mean...
 - someone who’s called to be...
 - a priest...or a deacon...or a nun.
 - God calls certain people to these vocations...
 - and He does this...like any vocation...
 - not primarily for the person themself...
 - but for the good of the whole Church.
- And why does He call us...to our specific vocations?
 - It’s a mystery! It’s God’s own secret.
 - We don’t choose it...
 - He chooses it for us.
 - Jesus said so at the Last Supper:
 - “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (Jn 15:16).
- What we can also say...is that each of us is unique.
 - Each of us has been endowed...
 - with our own unique gifts and charisms from the Lord.
 - So even though many people are called to a certain category...
 - like matrimony or priesthood...
 - each of us within that category...is entirely unique.
 - And the Church and the world...needs each of our unique gifts.
 - In other words...
 - it doesn’t matter what category we’ve been called to...
 - we are all...just as vital...to the mission of the Church...to help save souls!

- So, what would happen...if I didn't show up for Mass next Sunday?
 - We couldn't have Mass...right?
 - And what happens if you don't show up?
 - Really my point here...is that we can't have Mass...
 - at least...not the way it's supposed to be...
 - with all of our gifts and charisms coming together...
 - to make our worship of God complete.
 - Haven't we felt that...this past year?
 - Watching Mass on TV...
 - or celebrating Mass here...but without music...and very limited numbers.
 - But now...it's time for everyone to come back!
- And what would happen...
 - if Deacon Kevin or I didn't preach next Sunday?
 - You'd probably be thrilled!
 - But would your encounter of Jesus Christ...
 - be as complete...
 - without someone to preach the Gospel?
 - And what happens...
 - if you don't share His message with others?
 - Your witness...your mission...
 - sharing how Jesus touched your life...
 - that's just as vital.
 - I wouldn't be Catholic...let alone a priest...
 - without someone sharing their faith with me!
- So we're all called to a vocation of holiness.
 - And we're all called to a certain category of vocation...
 - that helps shape that holiness.
 - And each of us...
 - is just as vital to the mission of the Church.
- But when we talk about there being a "vocations crisis"...
 - don't we usually think...about a lack of priests?
 - And yet our crisis...
 - has nothing to do with numbers or categories...
 - rather it has everything to do with our baptismal call to holiness.
 - It's a crisis...in all of us.
- Holiness means being in the world...but not of it.
 - It means being different from the ways of our world...
 - and conformed to the ways of Jesus Christ.
 - Only when we strive to live like that...only then...
 - will we truly understand...
 - just how precious we are in God's sight...
 - and how vital we are to the mission of the Church...
 - in helping others...encounter the love and mercy of Jesus Christ.

- My brothers and sisters...
 - the age of easy faith is over.
 - It's hard to be holy in our world today...
 - And this world is exhausting itself...
 - chasing after one empty promise of happiness...after another...
 - but we hold the answer...to everyone's greatest desire:
 - Jesus Christ!
 - He alone can satisfy our hearts!
 - So the Church needs men and women of faith...
 - who will turn away...from comfortable...worldly lives...
 - who will listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd...
 - and follow Jesus Christ...
 - right into the midst...of that storm of confusion...that is raging out there.
 - That's the kind of faith...
 - that changed the world...
 - from the Upper Room...
 - some 2000 years ago...
 - And it's the only kind of faith...
 - that can change the world today.

- So the “crisis” in vocations...isn't just in the priesthood.
 - It's a crisis in each of us...
 - in our baptismal call to holiness.
 - If we take that call seriously...
 - if each of us brings our unique gifts and charisms...
 - and place them at the service of the Church...for the life of the world...
 - Then there can be no crisis!
 - In fact the opposite will be true.
 - There will be countless men and women...
 - coming forward to be priests and nuns.
 - There will be countless men and women...
 - fruitfully living their commitments...to the lay apostolate...
 - in bringing Jesus to others.
 - Our celebrations at Mass...
 - will be beyond what we've ever experienced...
 - And our RCIA program...will be packed with people...
 - who long to share...what they see reflected in our lives.
 - Why?
 - Because holiness is contagious – but it has to start right here.

- Archbishop's Catholic Appeal Follow up letter