

Jesus, Our Good Shepherd

This weekend we celebrate the Good Shepherd, Jesus says to us: "I am the good shepherd. I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep."

As we look upon Our Lord, we ought to remember this, we are never alone He loves us, He is always with us, He always leads us and cares for us. If we look back at our lives we will see how He has been there for us always.

We might think sometimes that it is a given priest that has brought us closer to God or helped us heal, yet as much as we can all be instruments of God's grace, as we hear in Acts today: "it is in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean that all these things are done, He is the cornerstone. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved." Jesus, is our one and only Good Shepherd, who will always be with us and care for us, through different instruments and mediations, for the Lord is good and His mercy endures forever, we take refuge in the Lord rather than trust in man, as we said in Psalm 118. We are always safe, we have no reason for fear, we are never alone

for we are God's children and God's love is always with us and constantly at work in us and for us, to complete God's amazing plans for us, for as we learn from the First Letter of John: "...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."

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows us and we know him. In his voice we find safety, we know we are loved. He cares for us and is present to us through our parish community. We hear his voice and experience his love and care through: his presence in the Most Holy Eucharist, the beauty of our worship spaces, the warmth of our fellow parishioners, the care he provides our children through our faith formation programs, the care we give our youth through ministry, retreats and service camps, our beautiful liturgies, our care for the sick and the elderly, our many ministries, our many volunteers, our catechists, our G.I.F.T. initiative, our music, our care for one another, our solidarity with the poor near us and even far away. The Good Shepherd is present to us and cares for us in these and so many other ways in our parish community. He cares for us through Dawn's generosity, leadership and love, Julia's creativity and commitment, Elizabeth's energy and hard work, and the list goes on and on. He also cares for us through our pastor: Father Daniel. For the last 4 years Fr. Daniel has been one of the many ways in which the gentle care of the Good Shepherd has been present to us through our parish community. In his ministry we have recognized the voice of the Good Shepherd, his love, his care.

Bishop Matano has seen Fr. Daniel's gifts, and in his care for the whole diocese has decided to appoint him to lead a parish composed of three churches serving the heart of the city of Rochester: Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish: Our Lady of the Americas Church, Annunciation Church and Saint Michael's Church. Father Daniel's last weekend with us will be June 19-20.

Even though we are sad to see him go and he is sad to leave us, we know that he will always keep us in his heart and in his prayers and that he is only a call, a text, an email or a short 70 miles ride away. We wish Fr. Daniel the best and we trust that the Good Shepherd will continue to care for us and to lead us into life in abundance.

A few words from Father Daniel:

First, I want to say thank you! Thank you for welcoming me into your parishes and into your lives, for allowing me to share your sorrows and your joys. Thank you for being open to my service among you and to the word that the Lord wanted to speak to your hearts through me. Thank you for opening your minds and hearts so that the Lord could touch your wounds through my hands and bring healing. Thank you for being patient with me and my many limitations and helping me learn how to be a pastor. Thank you for embracing this time the Lord gave us together and what the Lord wanted to bring to you through this passing opportunity. The time of our encounter is coming to an end, yet I rejoice for all that the Lord has given me, through you in these past four years, I have seized the opportunity to learn from you and the Lord has done great things for me, through you. The invitation to this transition comes at great cost. I have loved you and leaving you will not be easy, yet I am happy that the Lord is giving me an opportunity once again to surrender my will to His, and calling me to a completely new place, to encounter



new people and learn new things. This shows that even though I am a great sinner and my limitations are plentiful God's love for me is steadfast. God has not given up on me, God continues to work to complete in me the work He began and, in the loving care of the Good Shepherd for me, is calling me to new horizons and growth.

I believe that this transition is also a great sign of God's love and care for each one of you. What God wanted to offer you through me is complete and now the God that never ceases to work for your salvation is inviting you to a new encounter in the person of your new shepherd, to new growth, to new discoveries of the depth of God's love for you. My prayer for you is that you will truly open your minds, hearts and lives to what God is offering you and embrace your new shepherd's word and ministry among you, for blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

I am grateful to our beloved Bishop, His Excellency Salvatore R. Matano, for through him, the Vicar of Christ for our Diocese, our Lord has expressed His will for me, for your new shepherd and for our parish communities. I receive his word as the word of the Lord Himself and respond as we all have learned to respond to God's invitation from our Mother and Model: "Let it be done to me according to your Word".

Our Loving Lord and Shepherd is always working for our salvation, through all things, people and circumstances, when we humbly accept and embrace our lives and the Lord's invitations like Mary we make redemption possible, when we resist and fight, reject and close ourselves up we miss the opportunities that God is working to offer us. So, may we all say with Mary, always, let it be done to me according to your word.

If you have loved me as I have loved you, I ask a parting gift from you: accept the Lord's will openly and peacefully, do not resist, but open yourselves to this transition and truly welcome your new shepherd as the one God is sending to you to be the presence of the Good Shepherd among you and to lead you.

I ask that you refrain from any attempts to oppose the Will of God for me and for you and that under no circumstances write to our Bishop to oppose this transition. Nothing would be more hurtful to me after I have spent four years trying to model for you what it is to surrender our whole lives to God's Will, than to have you, my beloved children, now turn and sinfully oppose God's Will. So please let us be at peace, let us celebrate what has been, humbly mourn the loss of our departure from each other, and look towards the future with hope open to God's plans for good for each one of us.

Know that you are loved and that you will always be remembered with gratitude and prayed for. A.M.D.G., Father Daniel

The weekend of June 19 and 20 we will not have our usual Masses, instead we will have one outdoor Mass at each of the parishes followed by a small reception to say goodbye to Father Daniel. The Mass schedule will be: **Saturday 4 pm at Saint Anthony, Sunday 9 am at Holy Cross, Sunday 3 pm at All Saints.** The weekend of June 26 and 27 a missionary priest will be visiting and presiding at all our weekend Masses in the regular schedule.



In the Good Shepherd's gentle care for our parish communities, Bishop Matano, has appointed Fr. Jorge (George) Ramirez to be Parochial Administrator of our parishes. He will begin his ministry among us on June 29. Fr. Jorge, is a 40 year old native of Colombia, South America, with a great sense of humor, a compassionate heart and a profound sense of service. Father Jorge, came to the Diocese of Rochester in 2009. He completed his studies at Saint Mary's Seminary in Baltimore before his ordination in June of 2016. After his ordination he served as a Parochial Vicar at Holy Cross in Charlotte and currently serves as Parochial Vicar at Our Lady of the Lakes in Penn Yan. This will be his first time serving as a Parochial Administrator. A Parochial Administrator has the same duties and rights of a pastor. He will be a great blessing for us. He is very excited to come here. We trust that he is one more of those ways in which the Good Shepherd wants to care for us through our parish community. We welcome him and we pray for a fruitful ministry among us.

As our parish community faces changes and transitions we are aware of the plethora of ways in which the Good Shepherd is present to us, and we trust that in our parish community we will continue to hear his voice and to experience his loving care that keeps us safe no matter what.