



Thoughts on the Journey...

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After my trip to the country of Jordan, I was curious about shepherds in the region, so I read an article about the qualities of a good shepherd and this is what it said, “A good shepherd loves his sheep and develops a close, intimate relationship with them so that they know his voice and trust him; Understands the needs of the sheep better than they do; Understands what threatens sheep and what makes them sick; Works tirelessly to provide protection and security; Leads them to fresh pastures and fresh water; Searches out sheep when they stray; Defends sheep against all their enemies; Provides protection while they sleep; Shears them and examines each one for injury or disease; Goes ahead of sheep and prepares the path; Disciplines and corrects them; Comforts sheep when they are hurt or fearful; Keeps sheep “on the move” so they don’t get into a rut; Liberally anoints them with oil to prevent disease or to heal an injury; Keeps sheep from fighting and from hurting each other; Cares for, loves sheep, and sacrifices his life for them; Rejoices in the health, well-being, and prosperity of his flock; Will leave the flock to search for lost sheep; Experiences great joy in finding lost sheep; Carries the lambs close to his hear; Gently leads those with young; Gets deepest satisfaction from seeing that sheep are contented, well-fed, and safe”.

More than anything in my life, I enjoyed my vocation as ‘mother’. Then, six years ago I entered the new and amazing world of being a grandmother. Not only do my grandkids bring me happiness, but I also have the joy of watching my daughter and daughter-in-law experience the profound, unconditional love for their children. It’s a gift to witness their hard work as they juggle schedules and the challenges of raising a family. There are days when I marvel that they do what they do with only two arms and two hands!

In gathering my thoughts for this reflection, it dawned on me that we’re, not only celebrating

Good Shepherd Sunday, but we are also celebrating Mother’s Day. As I re-read the qualities of a good shepherd those very same qualities rang true for good mothers.

In the gospel of John this week, Jesus refers to himself as a shepherd and says,

“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”

It is the VOICE of our Lord, the shepherd, that calls to us continually. But, in order to hear him, we need to fine tune our hearts to his message. We need to embrace wholeheartedly what he desires of us in our lives. Regardless of our vocation, when it is Christ-centered, the works we do become a divine effort that changes the world around us.

In this world of secular distractions, it is so easy to drown out the voice of Christ who wants not to lose any of us to this world. It is his voice that speaks to us in prayer, in the sacraments, in his Word, in our service, in our sometimes suffering, in one another. It is the voice of the Good Shepherd, our Savior that longs to keep us moving closer to his Father.

Good mothers and good shepherds have a lot in common. As followers of Jesus, we are to be living examples of Christ. What we say and do matters in the conversion of others. How we live matters in a world where many are lost. Whether you’re a Mom, a priest, a Dad, a teacher, a store clerk, a nurse - regardless of your vocation, take a few minutes to re-read the qualities of a good shepherd. They are the same beautiful qualities of a God who humbled himself to come to this earth, who lived love, mercy, and compassion, suffered and died for our sins, and rose from the dead in glory. Listen to his voice so that you will not perish, but have eternal life!