

Resources

Sample Homily

Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

The holy scriptures provide us with many powerful images of Jesus used by the authors of the four gospels to help the early Christians come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the identity and ministry of Jesus. As Christians in the modern world, these images help us to paint a more complete portrait of Jesus as the Son of God. Among these lasting images are Jesus as the light of the world; Jesus as the living water; Jesus as teacher; Jesus as healer; Jesus as the way, the truth and the life; Jesus as the bread of life and Jesus as the messiah. But, perhaps the most beautiful and enduring image used to describe Jesus is that of Jesus as the good shepherd. This is the image presented to us in today's gospel. The image of the shepherd is rooted in the most ancient beliefs of the Jewish people. In the Hebrew Scriptures, it was God who was the shepherd. He cared lovingly for His flock. There was no need to be afraid, for God's staff would give His people courage and comfort even when they walked through a valley of darkness. God would lead His people beside restful waters and there He would refresh and renew their souls.

When John's gospel speaks of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, the evangelist harkens back to the Old Testament understanding of God the Shepherd. Just as God the Father cared lovingly for His flock, so too does Jesus, His Son, care lovingly for his own. The image of Jesus as the shepherd who lays down his life for us, is an image that comforts and consoles us in a world that can often seem callous, cold and indifferent to pain and suffering. In times when we journey through a valley of darkness, it is that good shepherd, Jesus, who cares for us, forgives us, and comforts us. Our faith teaches us that even when we stray and feel far from the love of the Father, it is the good shepherd who will go in search of us, heal our wounds and carry us in his loving arms back to the fold. If we can more fully understand and take to heart this great love the shepherd has for us, then we will experience a greater sense of gratitude and appreciation for what it means to belong to the flock of the good shepherd. Every day we will feel gratitude and joy that we are counted among His sheep and that He is always willing to lay down His life for each of us.

It is this sense of belonging to the flock of the good shepherd that brings forth in each of us a greater desire to respond in gratitude to God for all that He has given us. That personal response is expressed in prayer and worship, especially in the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist which is the Church's greatest expression of thanksgiving to God. The very word "eucharist" is derived from the Greek, meaning "to give thanks." As members of the same flock, another way we express our gratitude to God is by serving the needs of others. This call to serve others is lived out in our daily lives with family, in school, our neighborhood, and parish, at work and at home. And in a particular way, the Church always asks us to serve with compassion the poor and most vulnerable in our society.

As the Holy Father, Pope Francis put it, “to go out from the center to the peripheries in order to touch and heal the wounds of those who are on the margins of our society.” The third way we can express our gratitude to God is by making stewardship a way of life. This means that our time, talent and material resources are blessings that God gives to us so that in turn we can use them to build up His kingdom on earth. Today we are given an opportunity to express our love and gratitude to God as good stewards and members of His flock, by responding to the annual Diocesan Catholic Appeal.

Our personal commitment to the annual appeal is first and foremost an expression of our love for God and His people. This is because love is not only a feeling, emotion or words that we use to express that love, it is also how we choose to express that love in concrete and practical ways. When we make our commitment to the DCA Campaign we are putting our words, feelings and faith into action. We are expressing our love for the flock of the Good Shepherd in a practical and concrete way. Our commitment and sacrifice is then joined to that of others in order to strengthen the flock of the Good Shepherd. Today all of us are invited by our local Shepherd, Bishop Robert Coerver, to make our sacrificial commitment to the Diocesan Catholic Appeal.

Our response to the DCA will help touch thousands of lives throughout our diocese and will strengthen us. May our commitment be an expression of gratitude and joy for all that the Good Shepherd has given us. And may each of us be a greater witness of God’s love to others so that the flock of the Diocese of Lubbock may grow and prosper under the watchful eye of our loving and merciful God!

You may want to introduce the video at this time.

Thank you to the 2018-2019 DCA Campaign Chair,
Rev. Msgr. David Cruz for providing this homily
based on the readings from Good Shepherd Sunday
and the call to give on DCA Appeal Sunday.