

## Fr. Ryan's Homily 5/3/2020

Blessings to everyone out there. The Lord be with you.

Read John 10:1-10

Good Morning everyone or afternoon, when ever you might be listening to this. I do hope when you woke up this morning you took a moment to know how blessed you are. Even in the midst of all this stuff, you are blessed because Jesus is with us. Some of you may feel like He's left you. Nope, He's never left you. Never. You just don't always recognize Him. Like the apostles or the disciples didn't recognize Him after He rose from the dead. He's with you and He's never left. And what we're being asked to do right now as a church is to look again at avenues of grace we may have been neglecting or not thought about and delve into them, give ourselves over to them. Our prayer lives, our spiritual reading, to see and hear the ways Jesus has always been trying to be with us and speak to us but maybe we weren't letting Him. When I look at my own life, I think how many times have I been surprised that God knew what he was doing, and He was simply asking me to trust Him. That's pretty much been my entire journey into the priesthood. I go to college for one thing, God redirects me into the seminary. I'm unsure about going to a particular seminary, turns out to be one of the best experiences of my life. I think I'll be at a certain parish for many years and out of the blue just like that (snaps fingers), I'm asked to transfer. And every time something like that has happened in my life internally, I would say I don't know about this. Or I would say I think a mistake has been made. Or I would say I don't know if I agree with this. And every time, once that change has happened, I see that Jesus has remained by my side. And some good has risen out of it that I couldn't see at the beginning. And I can't help but think that is also going to be true about the time we're living in right now. And if we just continue to allow ourselves to be directed by Jesus, we will be able to look back and say, well wasn't that something. I never would have thought God would've been able to do that when this all started. And I think that's probably already happening for some of you as you reflect on your life and on this time. That we all say, WOW, somehow this was better than the vision I had in my mind originally. Because really that's been the story of my life, this constant passage from anxiety to surprise, from dread or uncertainty into joy. And it's that transition that I believe is at the heart

and soul of understanding Jesus as the good shepherd. He describes Himself as a shepherd today and as a gate. The shepherd image is one of guiding us to where we need to be, to pasture, to clean water. And the gate is an image of protection the sheep fold {sound cut out} it's an enclosure where the sheep are kept safe and the gate is the entry way in and out. That Jesus is that person with us taking us where we need to go and is protecting us on the journey. Now this idea of protection can be some what complicated for us because our assumption is if God, if Jesus is protecting me, then there is a prevention of misfortune in my life. Right, there is that idea that people have sometimes that when terrible things happen to us or we hear about them on the news that this is somehow part of God's plan. Have you heard that before? I'm sure you have. Well this is God's plan. And I think that can be a very dangerous way of putting it because it makes it sound like God wants bad things to happen along the way and He doesn't. Certainly, bad things happen on a lot of different levels, but they don't stem from God. They stem from humanity's disobedience at the very beginning in the garden that has now spread out over time and space and we deal with it today. Now part of this I said for myself was that uncertainty of being redirected, of not knowing if God knew what he was doing and finding out at the end he certainly did. But you can twist the dynamic in any way. It could be worry because you have cancer and maybe treatment isn't readily available now. It could be dread because of unemployment and the uncertainty of when that next paycheck will come. It could be fear because of some outcome you can't control. Those things are not God's plan but rather God is going to walk with you through that dark valley. God is that loving, abiding presence who is giving you courage and wisdom and perspective and hope as you grapple through what ever challenges are ahead for you. I guess what Jesus is really trying to say to us today is aren't you tired of being afraid, aren't you tired of being anxious, worried, stressed? Aren't you exhausted with trying to control the outcome? Because you don't have to. Because Jesus is that good shepherd that is leading and guiding you to the exact place that you are meant to be. And when you get there, it will be better than you could possibly imagine.

Amen