

In today's Gospel Our Lord teaches us that the only way to satisfy the call to holiness in our souls is through Him.

Jesus said, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;
I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

He describes himself as the "gate" to the sheepfold. Our Lord is not the only one who wants his sheep; He is just the one who has their best interests in mind. The flock in today's Gospel is already gathered. It is only through Christ "the gate" that they can be safe in the sheepfold or led to green pastures.

Our pastors are charged to shepherd the sheep, but they can only do that through Christ. If they don't remain united to Christ, they will lead their sheep astray.

A flock of sheep needs both **protection** and **nourishment**. The **sheepfold** provides the **protection**, and the **fields** provide the nourishment. In Palestine shepherds often **sleep** in the opening of the sheepfold, which is made from a **large circle** of thick, thorny **shrubby**. This way, wolves **smell** the shepherd's presence and **fear** to make midnight raids, while the sheep **keep together inside**, comforted by the presence of their protector and guide. When day finally dawns, the shepherd rises to **lead** his sheep out to pasture. Thus, the opening, the gate, symbolizes both **protection** and **nourishment**.

And so, when Christ calls Himself the "**gate for the sheep**," He is telling us what He wants to be for each of us: **everything**.

Through **Church teaching**, He provides a thick hedge of truth protecting us from false, seductive doctrines. Through the **sacraments**, He provides rich pasture to strengthen our needy souls. And **Jesus alone**, the Good Shepherd, gives the Church her **wisdom** and the sacraments their **power**.

We live in a world of many voices and many attractions. These voices can lead us to the voice of our Shepherd or drown out His voice and separate us from the One who truly feeds us. Your friends can lead you toward the Shepherd or away from Him if you let them.

Every day we can encounter the work of the Good Shepherd in our Society. We see people, organizations and institutions stepping up to help others, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the imprisoned, shelter the homeless. Everyday this takes place in our society. And that is our call.

We take courage that when we do these things, we do so because of the graces of the Good Shepherd. That we can carry out our call to holiness.

Tonight, we have an opportunity to encounter the grace of the Good Shepherd on a diocesan wide basis. As we launch our Living and Giving Appeal for your prayer and your involvement.