

Sunday April 22, 2018

Homily Dcn Joe

Reading Jn 10: 11-18 "The Good Shepherd"

In this Gospel, Our Lord describes Himself, as the Good Shepherd and He challenges us.

A good shepherd cares so much for His sheep that He is willing to lay down His life for them. A person hired to do such a job might say "this is not in my contract" and abandon them. Even the owner of the sheep might write them off as a wolf draws close, thinking to himself, "I'm insured," or "I'll need to write this off as a loss on my tax returns."

The Good Shepherd shares His life with His sheep. He is not indifferent to their trials and sufferings. So, He is not indifferent to their death. He would rather die first. This attitude goes beyond just business or even obligation: Jesus says, He willingly lays down His life for us, His sheep. And He did. He laid down His life in order to save us, His sheep, from the devil. He cares about each one of us.

Jesus came to break that domination, that evil had on us, since the Original Sin; to reclaim us for Himself, and through His grace, to lead us gradually out of our inherited, sinful, self-centeredness; - to the everlasting happiness of self-forgetful love. He didn't have to do this; He chose to, because He cares - He is the good shepherd.

Jesus is also the good shepherd because He is faithful to the mission He received from the Father. This mission of carrying out the Father's plan, of obeying the Father's will, consumes Jesus and constitutes in His mind the entire meaning of His life: "This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again... This command I have received from my Father."

Jesus Christ was perfect man; He lived his human life perfectly, and that perfection consisted in focusing wholly on the Father's will, in being passionately faithful to His own Sonship.

To discover and fulfill our own identity as children of God, and so experience life as He created us to live it, both now and in eternity, Jesus invites us to imitate him: "The sheep follow, because they know his voice" (John 10:4).

Jesus talks to us in this gospel about the fidelity of the hired man. You and I know there are many workers who take care of other people in our hospitals, at home, in communities, in schools, in public service, in the parishes. And I thank each of you. Most do this out of a sense of love for others and a great sense of compassion and service to others, and sometimes for a very meager salary in order to survive.

And there are those who work and are not at all interested in other people (you have encountered them) their attitude is that of a functionary, of a worker interested in earning only a salary, of a hired man, so to speak.

In a moment of danger, they are not interested, because, "the sheep are not theirs", the children are not theirs, the students are not theirs, their neighbors are not theirs, the faithful are not theirs, the sick are not theirs, the members of the community are not theirs.

Jesus does not condemn us; because the worker has a right to his salary. But He asks us to take another step forward and calls us to become the shepherd.

Jesus, our good shepherd, wants us to experience the meaning and joy that comes from discovering and striving to fulfill our life-mission.

Because Christ the good shepherd is our Lord, the Church, the one flock, will never fail. Our membership in this flock is perhaps the greatest gift we have received from the Lord after the gift of life itself.

This is one of the most compelling reasons behind the Church's calling all of us to be evangelized. We are all called to receive the good news of Christ and then spread the good news of Christ, and to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19), bringing everyone into this one flock. The one flock that has been given the divine guarantee that it will never fail, never be permanently scattered and destroyed by wolves.

Jesus is the good shepherd, the one we can trust, the one who cares more about our lives than we do about ourselves. The Lord who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for ours. (cf. Matthew 20:28). He truly is our good shepherd and He calls us to be good shepherds and good sheep as well.

Most of us want to be; that's why we are here today. But even if we already are good sheep, without a doubt, sometimes we have failed and desire to become better sheep. Today, as He renews His commitment to us, let us renew our commitment to Him, and promise Him, that this week, we will be better sheep when we are called and better shepherds when we are called.