

Fourth Sunday of Easter

It's been said that every pastor ought to have six weeks of vacation each year, because if he is a really good shepherd, he deserves it; and if he is not a very good shepherd, his congregation deserves it.

Dear friends,

Today we remember the fourth Sunday of Easter! This is usually called Good shepherd Sunday. Today we also remember world day of prayer for vocations. Let us pray for the vocation to the priesthood for our diocese in a special way.

I want to share this story with you today. This is about a pop quiz that was given to a new class of nursing students in the first year of their training. Most of the students did well on the quiz until they came to the last question, which they all left blank. That question was, "What is the name of the woman you see every morning who cleans our section of the school?" The students thought that the question was a joke. But when they got their papers back, every one of them was marked off for the question. They protested. The professor said, "Her name is June. In your careers you will meet many people. All of them are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you can do is smile and say "hello." The students never forgot the lesson, or June's name.

The readings help us to reflect the inclusiveness of everyone whom we come across in our life. Think about how many people we know from our childhood. How many do we care about? Jesus in the Gospel says, "I am the good shepherd." He compares the relation between a good shepherd who cares and a hired worker who looks up his own in everything. He leads, listens and loves everyone. How many of us know each other? How many of us want to know others?

Bishop Ricken used to say this, "Even if you are the only person who lived in this world, Jesus loves you and he died for you." That is the love of a shepherd who laid down his life for us.

Rosemary Haugton, wrote the book, "The passionate God," in that book she talks about two ways of life: on one side, "Grab and Keep." On the other, "Receive and Let Go." Imagine that there are handles in everything that we have. We try to grab and keep it for us alone. It may be our house, car, career, reputations and other possessions and so on. But there is an alternate way of life. It has to do with love, the kind that the good shepherd shows us. Love says, "the real value in life is to receive, not to grab and possess." All that you have and all that you are is a gift from God. You can open your hands and let

God pour into them whatever you really need. And if you keep those hands open, you can easily let what you have pass on to others, those who are in need.

The Gospel offers us both comfort and challenge. The comforting good news is that Jesus the Good Shepherd knows us, provides for us and loves us. The challenge is that we should be good shepherds to those entrusted to our care.

Pope Francis in His encyclical (2015) "Laudato Si" (On care for our common Home) talks about the inclusiveness of the environment. Our encounter with Jesus Christ should impact our relationship with the world that surrounds us.

As Peter becomes the witness to the community, let us care for one another. Let us reflect about how can I be a good shepherd in my family? In my work place / other places where I can be a good shepherd?