

# THE PASTOR'S POST

## BE A SHEEP

Dear Parish Family:

I use a resource for prayer, at times, called Sacred Space. (This is not a recommendation or an endorsement. It's just something that helps me at times in the spiritual life.) It is based in the Ignatian tradition of the Church inviting the reader to reflect about the presence of God while incorporating the Gospel for daily Mass.

The reflection this week has called me to reflect more deeply on what it means to be a child of God. It is a concept the writers of the book took, I believe, from some of the readings offered throughout the week. It sort of pushed me to think of my own parents and those other "parent-figures" in my life who seek to care, nurture, support, challenge and embrace me. I think of how, at times, I might be called to do the same as a "father-figure" to others. Why do we struggle, at times, to see God caring for, nurturing us, supporting us, challenging us, and embracing us in the same way?

I'd be a better man, disciple, and priest if I can surrender a bit more to my proper role as a child of God first before thinking of the ways I am supposed to be a co-worker in the vineyard or the field. If I start to remember who I am first - a child of God - then it changes how I approach everything else in my day. If I'm a child of God - with the ability to surrender, to trust, to turn to my loving God - then it is not just what I am doing, it is what I am doing with God's help, presence, and nurturing love for with me.

This all comes to mind because of today's readings. I'm not so much drawn to the image of the Shepherd - good or bad - as we listen and read about it in each of the readings. I'm drawn more to reflect on my role as a sheep, the one led by and cared for by THE Shepherd. I think the psalm might give us some clues as to how to best proceed being better sheep, better children of

God. It is a psalm we're familiar with, maybe even too familiar with at times. So, let's consider three actions that might help:

- **He leads me...** In my life and yours, who takes the lead? Truthfully, for me, most often I do. THEN, I ask the Lord to come along. Rather than seeking where the Lord leads, I prefer to go on my path and hope he'll come along. Good sheep follow the shepherd! We should take some more time to ask the Lord the best way to proceed and follow his lead.
- **I fear no evil; for you are at my side...** At times, I can find myself paralyzed by fear and anxiety. There are valid responses to concerns that can plague us in this life. We do face evil, we know dark valleys (as another part of the psalm highlights). As good sheep though, we must remember no matter what we face, we do not face it alone. The shepherd is always at our side.
- **Only goodness and kindness follow me...** More on this next week, I hope. We must always take time to see the goodness and kindness that God makes known to us during each day and moment of our lives. Like a good shepherd, a good parent, God is always showering good things on his people, especially his beloved child - YOU!
- **All the days of my life...** The relationship between a parent and a child is not time limited. No. It is everlasting. This is true of the shepherd's love for his sheep, of the Father's love for his children. Never forget this! God is not going anywhere!

So this week, be a sheep. Ask THE Shepherd to lead you and guide you. More importantly, let him just love you as his beloved son or daughter. Please pray for me. I promise the same.

*Fatherhood*

