May 07, 2017  
Fourth Sunday in Eastertide – “Vocation – Answering the Shepherd’s Call”  
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**Reading 1  Acts 2:14A, 36-41**

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

**Reading 2  1 Peter 2:20B-25**

Beloved: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

**Gospel  John 10:1-10**

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "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."

**HOMILY**

One day God was looking down at earth and noticed everything that was going on. So, he called one of his angels to go to earth to find out more. When the angel returned, he told God, “Yes, it is not going well on Earth; 95% are misbehaving and only 5% are not.”

God thought for a moment and said, “Maybe I should send another angel to get a second opinion.” So, God called another angel and sent him to earth for a time, too. When the second angel returned, he went to God and said, “Yes, unfortunately, it’s true. The earth is in decline; 95% are misbehaving, but 5% are being good.”
God was not pleased. So he decided to send an email to the 5% who were being good, because He wanted to encourage them, and give them a little something to help them keep going in their good ways.

Do you know what the email said?

No?

Okay, just wondering. I didn't get that email either.

God does talk to us, but not by phone, not by email, not Facebook, and He doesn’t tweet us. God talks to each one of us, deep inside our heart. God calls each of us by name, as today’s Gospel passage from John says, “The shepherd calls his own sheep by name.”

Each year, on Good Shepherd Sunday, the Church puts a focus on vocations, from the Latin vocare, “to call,” and today is the 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Each of us, as a member of the Body of Christ, has a common vocation – to share in the priestly function of Christ. From the Catechism: “We are his servants helping in His work of salvation. The Lord commissions all members of His body to preach the good news of salvation. We do this through prayer, loving service of others, healing and reconciliation, acts of justice and mercy shown to the poor and oppressed, and through any work on behalf of God’s kingdom.” Allow me to sum that up: we all have that common vocation, that commission, that calling to do something positive with our life by helping in Christ’s work of salvation.

Today, we are especially reminded to pray for vocations to the ordained priesthood and to religious life. Regardless what age you’re at, have you ever considered becoming a priest or a religious sister or brother? Consider that a recent survey of Catholics, both church-going and otherwise, showed about 1 in 6 men and 1 in 6 women responded positively to that question. … Now, who has ever thought about becoming a deacon? That poll also said that only 1 in 20 Catholic men responded positively to that question, so if you said yes, see me after Mass and I will bring the application forms with me. … Final question – who has ever encouraged someone else to be a priest, religious sister or brother? That happens to be a very important step in the vocation process for most.

When I was scheduled for this weekend’s homily, I wondered how to approach the subject matter, not being a priest. But, being a cradle Catholic, with 16 years of Catholic education, I’ve had Franciscan sisters, diocesan priests and LaSallian Christian brothers as educators. I became an altar boy in the 5th grade, being taught by an 8th-grader who wanted to become a priest. In my early teens, I attended the ordination of my cousin, Peter, who became a Franciscan priest, and that left a very positive impression on me. In 9th grade, I had a 1-on-1 discussion with a priest about a priestly vocation. I dismissed it fairly quickly – after all, my younger brother often pretended to be a priest, using other younger brothers to be the altar boys. After college and grad school, I married Barb, with my cousin, Peter, presiding. Throughout my life, there was always a priest around, in confession or otherwise, who could help when I needed spiritual help. There were always religious around, who could help, in service, in teaching, by example. Think about the help from priests or religious that you may have received through the years. That help is so much needed now, perhaps more than ever.

My own calling to the diaconate came subtly through the years. I began weekly Eucharistic Adoration at St. John’s chapel when it began in 1990, at about the same time Barb and I became involved with pro-life and pro-family activities. In the years that followed, we were drawn to learn more about our faith as we helplessly watched some family and good friends drift away from the faith – the more we learned, the more we wanted to know and the more the jigsaw puzzles of our faith fit together. Just about 10 years ago, while at adoration, I read about a diaconate learning session, and something inside me said,
“Go, find out more, and do it now!” The urgency of that calling, as it were, began a journey which I have felt God at my side the whole time – with Him leading the way, while guiding and encouraging me.

I asked if you’ve ever thought about becoming a priest, religious sister or brother. What kept you, or what keeps you, from pursuing that further? If single, perhaps you wanted to get married. A great vocation – helping your mate and any children or other family members along on their faith journeys. But, consider this statistic: a Time magazine article from a few years ago said that only 9% of Americans older than 25 had never been married – however, that was reflecting the results of a 1960 poll, 57 years ago. By the time of the article, that number had increased to 20%. Ok, people are getting married later in their lives, right? Well, yes, and no – current projections show that almost 25% of today’s millennials, 1 out of 4, may never marry. … Perhaps you want to pursue a career that you have a great interest in. One great vocational chart I’ve seen shows a large block at the top that says, “Universal Call to Holiness.” There’s a large block at the bottom that says, “Careers/Jobs.” In between those two blocks are 4 paths that one can travel, “Priesthood, Religious Life, Married Life, Single Life.” Think about that – not just teachers or service-providers, as important as they are, but also scientists, lawyers, doctors – consider Fr. Rick in Haiti, for example. … Perhaps no-one ever asked you. Maybe God is asking, but the noise around us every day keeps us from hearing that voice, that calling from the Good Shepherd, as He calls our name. You know, that noise – in any form – audible and visible distractions, bad or meaningless habits, negative jokes and comments from others. … Perhaps you need guidance or to talk with someone about it – several months ago, I met a young fellow who seemed disturbed and I asked if he was ok. He was confused with his life, the expectations ahead of him – basically, his future. How many young people do we know like that, who just need someone to listen to them, or even a little guidance.

What are some ways that you can help? First, I feel that I’m in good company – both Pope Francis and Bishop Matano enthusiastically promote Eucharistic Adoration, quiet time with Our Lord, to pray and to listen to what God is calling each of us to do. Pray for yourself and for every Christian to live out their common vocation – to do something positive with their life by helping in Christ’s work of salvation. Pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. If you can’t make adoration, pray at home, in a quiet area and at a quiet time. Second, encourage the youngsters, or even someone you believe would be a good candidate, to consider the priesthood or a religious vocation, to think about it, to ask questions about it. If you don’t know an answer, ask Father, Deacon Juan, our vocations team, or myself. Finally, learn and live your faith, to provide a good Christian example to others. I will end from a quote from Pope Francis, for this World Day of Prayer for Vocations: “Those who drawn by God’s voice and determined to follow Jesus soon discover within themselves an irrepressible desire to bring the Good News to their brothers and sisters through proclamation and the service of charity. All Christians are called to be missionaries of the Gospel! As disciples, … we are simply men and women touched and transformed by the joy of God’s love, who cannot keep this experience just to ourselves.”

Simply put, God calls us to follow Jesus and enthusiastically share the good news of God’s love with others.