

# 4th Sunday of Easter / Good Shepherd Sunday

Good Shepherd Sunday ..... each year on this the 4th Sunday of Easter, we celebrate “The Good Shepherd.” Each one of us can take on this moniker ourselves, because we are — everyone of us — engaged in the Ministry of Shepherding. We have our own personal Ministry of Shepherding, maybe within family, and then in our Vocation /Work, and many in our Avocation (in other words where we are called to work in some special ministry. Today, I pay very special tribute to those of our parish family who work so tirelessly in the premier instruction program for our children, The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. How blessed and enriched we are by the generous response of these brothers and sisters who not only teach each week, but they also go through extensive training in order to be instructors. It is almost like acquiring another degree / diploma. .... Thank you ..... I wish to also acknowledge those who instruct our young people .... all of those who worked tirelessly in preparing our young people for the Sacrament of Confirmation this past Wednesday. The bishop leaned over to me after Communion and said how impressed he was with the whole service — the response of our Candidates, their preparedness, how responsive and engaged all were, and a lovely size congregation, he said.

Thank you for coming out and supporting our young men and women of whom we are very proud. Today, in a very special way, I say thank you to all who are engaged in the Ministry of Shepherding in our parish. Those who lead all of our programs and processes that help shepherd our people. All who work and lead the RCIA process, all who have accepted and taken a leadership role in teaching, instructing, and guiding our people through these times of growth in our parish. Those who have generously accepted Leadership Roles in ChristLife, as table leaders and support teams, all of the wonderful meals that have been provided for so many special occasions. Those who lead Small Groups, and planned those events so well, and those who have been so generous in their participation and engagement of Lectio Divina, Bible Studies, and all other sharing processes. The Knights of Columbus and the Women’s Guild who have provided so much in service to our family. The people who do such a great and special job in preparing all of those who accept shepherding roles in our Liturgy on a weekly basis. Those who work behind the scenes very devotedly preparing for our weekly liturgies and special celebrations. Those who work behind the scenes in preparing for Mass on a daily and weekly basis, they make sure we have all of the necessary ingredients for a fruitful

celebration .....just the right number of robes and vessels to cause everything to flow smoothly. Those who lead Children's Liturgy. Those who have invested huge hours and enormous energy in our music program, past and present, you have so enhanced our worship experience. Our full-time staff and all of our many generous volunteers. And all of you who have chosen to make St. Paul your parish home..... Thank You. Your participation has been a huge part of Shepherding our Parish Community. Thank you Sincerely, on this Good Shepherd Sunday. I hope I have not left out anybody. I just want you to know you have done some extraordinary Shepherding and huge work in building His Kingdom.

We have sadly lost some of our sheep along the way, but we will always be open to finding them, and having them in their rightful place with us. We have "come a long way baby" ..... Thank You ! Give yourselves, and each other a great round of applause !

Now, we have a whole new venture of Shepherding as we move into our future. Last weekend, we had our very generous leaders of The Capitol Campaign Committee, under the Guidance of a Parish Son, Thomas Harris, present to you our plans for expansion and renovation to secure the future of our parish. We have spent more than 5 years working on these plans. We took time away from those plans to renew ourselves through the ChristLife process when we met an impasse in regard to going forward. Now, we are back with a full commitment and devotion to the plan that has been put in place.

I hope you got to hear the testimonies of our brothers and sister at last weekend's Masses. They are a great tribute to those individuals and to their commitment to growing our Church long into the future. If you did not have the chance to hear them, I encourage you to check our website for those testimonies, they will be available later this week along with the related plans.

This is a time for us to invest in, not just the present, but in the future of our Church. We have had the opportunity to celebrate many wonderful events in our church because of the generosity of our fore-bearers. Their generosity provided the opportunity for us to be beneficiaries of this present community, this building. Our generosity will be the source of benefit for the next generation. We pay it forward..... and the Church of Jesus Christ, has always and forever been maintained by that spirit of generosity. To me, one of the genuine keys is that we are investing in

gratitude for those who went before us, and set us up. They were visionaries and trail-blazers in the history of St. Paul Parish. Now, we invest in a powerful future for those coming after us. That is the true experience of being a beneficiary of His Kingdom.

Those of us old enough (mature enough) to remember the early sixties, and the immortal words of our Catholic president in his inaugural address ..... got it very right ..... "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." I invite you to be very responsive to our campaign !

In the latter part of this week, or next week, you will receive a letter in the mail outlining the plan and the process. I ask you when you receive this information to please take time to be prayerful and reflective about this plan and about your response. I invite you to take it to prayer and trust the Lord. I promise He will Guide you in this decision. Simply be reflective on how the Lord is calling you to respond at this time .... be patient .... I assure you the Good Lord will let you know how and when to respond.

There will be a number of social gatherings to familiarize you with the plans, and to provide you the opportunity to dialogue, ask questions, and chat with the leaders of this plan, and this Campaign. We will have a Commitment Sunday ...Pledge Sunday..... June 22/ 23 where we ask you to bring your pledge on that weekend, and offer that gift to the Lord and to our parish community in a second Collection. Naturally, if you are away on that weekend or unable to attend Mass here at St. Paul, we will gladly accept your pledge during that week. However, all we ask for the present time is that you be prayerful and reflective as we prepare to celebrate the feast of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost ! No need for a decision until you have heard the message and answered any questions you may have.

I promise you, I will personally be prayerful, and I will respond to the Lord's invitation, and to our commitment to the future. I ask the same of you. We are asking : "Not Equal Gifts .... But Equal Sacrifice." There is no way we could make equal gifts, but there is most assuredly a way in which we can make an equal sacrifice. The good news is that we have the Money! The bad news is : It is still in our pockets! Thank you very much!

—Fr. Gerry Hurley