

## Sunday Homily of May 7, 2017 on John 10:1-10

**On this Good Shepherd Sunday and *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, the Church reminds us of our call to become good shepherds of God's flock and good sheep of His parishes and invites us to pray for vocations to the priesthood, the diaconate and the consecrated life.** Both the Old and New Testaments use the image of a Shepherd and His flock to describe the unique relationship of God with Israel and of the Christ with Christians. The first reading is taken from St. Peter's first sermon, given on the day of Pentecost. He reminds his Jewish listeners that they have crucified their true Shepherd. Hence, they need to receive the forgiveness of their sin by getting baptized in the name of Jesus and acknowledging the risen Jesus as their Lord and Savior, as Jesus had commanded. The Responsorial Psalm (Ps 23), introduces Yahweh as the Good Shepherd of Israel Who cares for us, His sheep, providing for our needs. In the second reading, Peter encourages the suffering Christians to follow in the footsteps of their Good Shepherd, Jesus, the "suffering servant," realizing the truth that Jesus' suffering and death have enabled them to become more fully the children of God. In today's Gospel, two brief parables show us Jesus, the first as our unique gateway to eternal salvation ("sheep gate") and the second as a selfless, caring "shepherd" who provides his sheep protection and life itself.

### **1) We need to become good shepherds and good leaders:**

Everyone who is entrusted with the care of others is a shepherd. Hence, pastors, parents, teachers, doctors, nurses, government officials and caregivers, among others, are all shepherds. **We become good shepherds by loving those entrusted to us, praying for them, spending our time, talents and blessings for their welfare, and guarding them from physical and spiritual dangers.** Parents must be especially careful of their duties by giving good example and instruction to their children, training

them in Christian principles. **2) We need to become good sheep in the fold of Jesus, the Good Shepherd:** Our local parish is our sheepfold, and our pastors are our shepherds. Jesus is the High Priest, the Bishops are the successors of the Apostles, the pastors are their helpers and the parishioners are the sheep. Hence, as the good sheep of the parish, parishioners are expected to a) Hear and follow the voice of our shepherds through their homilies, Bible classes, counseling and advice. b) Receive the spiritual food given by our pastors through our regular participation in the Holy Mass, our frequenting of the Sacraments and our participation in the prayer services, renewal programs and missions they offer. c) Cooperate with our pastors by giving them positive suggestions for the welfare of the parish, by encouraging them in their duties, by lovingly correcting them with constructive criticism when they are found misbehaving or failing in their duties and always by praying for them d) Actively participate in the activities of various councils, ministries and parish associations. **3) We need to pray for vocations. (L/17)**

**1) "I guess you must be a sheep dog."** A pastor was teaching the 23rd Psalm in the Sunday school. He told the children about sheep, that they weren't smart and needed lots of guidance, and that a shepherd's job was to stay close to the sheep, protect them from wild animals and keep them from wandering off. He pointed to the little children in the room and said that they were the sheep and needed lots of guidance. Then the pastor put his hands out to the side, palms up in a dramatic gesture, and with raised eyebrows said to the children, "If you are the sheep, then who is the shepherd?" He was pretty sure that all the kids would point out to him as the shepherd. A silence of a few seconds followed. Then a young girl said, "Jesus! Jesus is the shepherd." The young pastor, obviously caught by surprise, said to the little girl, "Well then, who am I?" The girl frowned thoughtfully and then said with a shrug, "I guess you must be a sheep dog."

**2) Pastor's vacation:** 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.