

Homily Outline for the 4th Sunday of the Year – Cycle B
Good Shepherd Sunday
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
April 25, 2021

† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

- I. Today is known as Good Shepherd Sunday, as the passage of St. John's Gospel about the Good Shepherd is read every year on the 4th Sunday of Easter.
 - A. The image of the Good Shepherd was popular from the earliest days of the Church, as seen in the many murals, etchings, mosaics and sculptures in the catacombs and other buildings.
 - B. Every pastor is a shepherd, as the Latin word *pastor* means shepherd in English.
- II. The bishop's pastoral staff or crozier is a symbol of being the shepherd of the diocese.
 - A. The crook of the staff symbolizes gathering the flock and keeping the sheep united.
 - B. But the staff can also be used to prod them when they get complacent.
 - C. It is also used to ward off the wolves who seek to attack the flock.
- III. Good Shepherd Sunday is celebrated as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
 - A. In our diocese, we have begun asking people to pray for vocations every day at 4:40.
 - 1. The time is from our stated goal of having 40 seminarians for our diocese.
 - 2. This is not impossible if we have faith and perseverance.
 - B. We can also encourage young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood.
 - 1. This is not just the job of the vocation director.
 - 2. Many priests heard their call through the encouragement of parents, and sometimes even from complete strangers; example of my cousin, Fr. Dennis Saran, being encouraged by his dying wife to consider priesthood after her death.

- C. Related to the ordained priesthood is the permanent diaconate; such vocations also need to be encouraged.
 - D. We also encourage young women to consider religious life.
 - E. These days we must encourage young people to enter into the Sacrament of Matrimony.
 - 1. We cannot take it for granted that young people will get married these days.
 - 2. The Sacrament of Matrimony must be held up as a beautiful way of giving of yourself completely for the love of your spouse and your children.
- IV. In a sense, each one of us is called to be a Good Shepherd: the bishop as shepherd of the diocese, priests as shepherds of their parish communities, deacons and consecrated religious as shepherds of the people they serve, and parents as shepherds of the domestic church, their families.
- A. Whether our flock is a diocese of 125,000 people, a parish of several hundred families, or a household with parents and children, we are called to imitate Jesus, the Good Shepherd.
 - B. St. John assures us that we shall be like Jesus “for we shall see Him as he is” (1 John 3:2).
 - 1. We are to be like Jesus in this life: trustworthy, loyal, loving, willing to lay down our lives for those in our care.
 - 2. We also look forward to being like Jesus in the life to come: raised up in glory!
 - 3. The Eucharist that we are about to receive is the key to sharing in the divinity of Christ, the Good Shepherd.
- V. May God give us this grace. Amen.