

Fr. John's Sunday reflection- The Good Shepherd

May 3, 2020

Greetings

The pandemic asks much of us. Some have professional roles such as health care providers, first responders or pastors. Others serve as crucial essential workers in groceries stores, the Post Office and other delivery services. Parents find themselves teaching as well as raising their children. Students, at home, may find themselves looking out for younger siblings or after grandparents. We all know the crucial responsibility of practicing social distancing and at the same time reaching out to those who need appropriate attention. So much shepherding!

The Good Shepherd announces today that he comes so that "we may have life and have it abundantly". (John 10:1-10) Perhaps the social distancing challenges us to reflect upon what kind of life we want. What type of person do we want to become? Where do we want more life?

In the parish where I am pastor, the artist of a stained glass window, depicts Jesus in what I find unique. There, the Good Shepherd holds the lamb against his chest. Usually, an artist depicts Jesus as in the classical good shepherd of Greek and Roman sculpture: carrying the wounded lamb on his shoulders. But, in the stained glass window, the lamb turns away from where he or she is going with the shepherd. Instead, the lamb looks at the face of Jesus. For the lamb, the destination is not as important as the lamb's trust in the Good Shepherd. The lamb keeps his or her eyes fixed on the Shepherd - expressing trust in Him.

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In John's Gospel, the Greek word describing "the goodness" of the Good Shepherd is "kalos". Another Greek word "agathos" in Christian scripture refers to "goodness" in the technical sense as being "good" or helpful with information technology, accounting or medicine. "Kalos" on the other hand, refers to goodness that attracts, a goodness that moves hearts.

The lamb, as do we, recognize the "goodness" of the Good Shepherd. Our hearts are often taken by echoes of this goodness in the Good Shepherds in our lives: caring parents, interested coaches and healthy mentors. The lamb trusts the Shepherd. So do we trust the Good Shepherds in our lives. Again, the lamb is not so interested in where he or she is going.

In this global pandemic, we can't pretend to know everything about the virus, or the effects of the virus in our lives, families, the College, our country or even the planet. The Gospel, and the Good Shepherd in the stained glass window, draws me to reflect on the goodness of the Good Shepherd. Jesus is trustworthy. In the middle of this pandemic, so much we don't know. Maybe, we can't know - at least right now. But, we can decide

to trust in the Good Shepherd whose goodness draws us to him. Let us allow the "goodness" of the Good Shepherd to energize us, so that we may live to the full.

Sunday Masses:

From Pope Francis (with English translation)

Pope Francis Mass: The Good Shepherd from Casa Santa Martha Chapel

From Churches in Western Massachusetts

Masses in Western Massachusetts

From Sts. Patrick and Raphael Parish

Sts Patrick and Raphael Parish

Be safe. Shepherd others well, from a distance.

Blessings,

Fr. John

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