

Good Shepherd Sunday and the World Day of Prayer for Vocations: Acts 2:14, 36–41; 1 Peter 2:20b–25; and John 10:1–10:

Joke: The Best Sheep Dog: A pastor was teaching the 23rd Psalm to children and explained that sheep need guidance and a shepherd to protect them. He asked, "If you are the sheep, then who is the shepherd?" A young girl replied, "Jesus is the shepherd!" The pastor asked, "Well then, who am I?" The girl shrugged and said, "I guess you must be the sheep dog".

On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Church gives us a beautiful and challenging image: **Jesus the Good Shepherd**. And today, we also celebrate the **World Day of Prayer for Vocations**—a reminder that the voice of the Shepherd is still calling people today.

In the Gospel, Jesus says something striking: *"I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved... I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."* Notice that—Jesus is not only the shepherd who leads; He is also the gate. That means He is both the guide and the way. He doesn't just point toward life—He *is* the way into life. But then Jesus adds something very important: *"The sheep hear his voice... he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."* The Christian life begins with **hearing a voice**.

In the first reading, we see this happening. Peter proclaims the message boldly, and the people are "cut to the heart." They ask, *"What are we to do?"* That question—*What are we to do?* —is the beginning of a vocation. A vocation is not just about priesthood or religious life. It is about discovering: **What is God calling me to do with my life?** Peter answers them clearly: *"Repent and be baptized... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* In other words, the first step in any vocation is not a career choice—it is a **conversion of heart**.

Then, in the second reading, St. Peter reminds us what following the Shepherd looks like: *"Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps."* This is where it becomes real. The voice of the Good Shepherd does not always lead to comfort. Sometimes it leads to sacrifice. Sometimes it leads to patience in suffering, to forgiveness, to choosing what is right when it is difficult. But why follow Him there? Because, as Peter says, *"By his wounds you have been healed."* The Shepherd who leads us is not distant—He has walked the path Himself.

And this brings us to today's special focus: **prayer for vocations**. If the Shepherd is still calling... are we listening? God continues to call: **some to be priests and shepherd His people, some to religious life, some to marriage and family life, and all to lives of holiness and service**. But here's the reality: many voices compete with His voice. Noise. Distractions. Fear. The pressure to succeed by the world's standards. And so His call can be missed—not because He is silent, but because we are not listening.

Today, the Church asks us to do three simple things: First, **pray**: Pray that more people will hear and respond to God's call—especially to priesthood and religious life. The Church needs shepherds who reflect the heart of Christ.

Second, **encourage**: Sometimes a vocation begins with a simple word: "Have you ever thought God might be calling you?" Never underestimate the power of encouragement.

Third, **listen ourselves**: Vocation is not just "their" issue—it is mine and yours. Each of us must ask: *Where is the Good Shepherd leading me right now?* What step is He asking me to take?

Jesus ends the Gospel with a promise: *"I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."* God's call is never a loss. It is always an invitation to fullness of life. The Good Shepherd is not trying to take something from us—He is leading us to something greater. So today, let us listen for His voice. Let us trust where He leads. And let us pray that many will have the courage to follow. Because when we follow the Good Shepherd, we don't lose our lives—we finally find them. Amen