

Fourth Sunday of Easter B 2018

You are getting the family ready for an appointment. It is the usual adventure....made so because you are a clock watcher. For as long as you can remember....maybe your mother taught you this....you have had a kind ofattitude.....about being on time. I'm not talking about being somewhere 30 seconds before the bell rings....I mean like ten minutes before you supposed to be someplace...to the doctor's....or a hair appointment....or Church. You are typically on site and ready well before the appointed time..

So you are getting the family ready for....let's say, Church to keep it current....patiently standing in the kitchen; car keys in hand, unconsciously drumming your fingers on the counter, waiting for the tornado, your children, to come flying down the stairs.

You are calm. You don't scream....you don't holler.....you just wait.....

You are conscious of every tick of the clock and have been mentally re-computing the distance from home to your destination --- remarkably it has not changed.

You have factored in weather,

You are aware your car is in the garage and it will take time to warm-up....

all the while you are afraid you are coming dangerously close to being late. Granted, late to you is still five to ten minutes ahead of the bell, or the appointment or the opening hymn....but in your mind you are going to be late.

Eventually the family appears and you calmly but sternly usher them out the door to the waiting car and the appointment. Miraculously you make it on time...with time to spare....and you are at peace.

Have you ever considered that parenting act a ministry? It is you know.

It is a shepherding ministry.

It is a ministry entrusted to parents, heads of households, church leaders, administrators, teachers, counselors, anyone who has some responsibility for and authority over others. It is a ministry that has to be exercised with patience....with kindness...with love.

Jesus gives us a picture of himself as a shepherd today. A good shepherd. The narrative comes in John's gospel in the section on signs....signs that Jesus gives that will help people understand him...see, in the light of God's inspiration, who he is....find, in the words he teaches, a new direction...a new path....a gateway to eternal life....our leader, the Good Shepherd. There is a school of thinking...a management science...that suggests the only good employee is the employee who embraces the company he works in...whatever it is...and serves it as if it were his own.

Jesus uses an example of that theorem when he compares his presence as different from shepherds who are *per diem* workers....hired for the day.... to tend the flock. Imagine what it would be like to have a *per diem* as your pastor....or your Bishop. Both are commissioned by God to care for our souls. If they were casual laborers, they would put in their time and go home. Hired men have no corporate allegiance. That's the comparison Jesus uses. The hired shepherds have no sense of ownership of the flock. They really don't care....just pay me. If

things get rocky during the day, I'm out-a-here. These are shepherds whose path is unsure and unsteady. They are not fit to lead. They are not fit to inspire.

The good shepherd, Jesus, holds everything together. His voice, his presence, his commands all lovingly direct the flock. He is the cornerstone. As a good shepherd he is the cornerstone of his flock. As a good shepherd, the cornerstone of his Church.

Peter, who Jesus called a rock, tells the Jewish leaders in the first reading that they missed the boat. *The stone you rejected*, he tells them, Jesus, *is the cornerstone* and the road to salvation. In words his listeners would understand...and appreciate....Jesus pledges to lay down his life, if necessary, for his sheep.

And that is exactly what he did for us, his Church, on Good Friday.

Few of us are asked by God to lay down our lives for another...but some do. For most of us the dedication to our God and the lessons we have learned from his Son require less trauma. We are asked to be gentle, kind, understanding, patient and most of all loving of God and each other.

Loving in our desire to receive the Lord's gift of himself in Eucharist.

Loving in our need to open our hearts to Him and to those in need.

Loving in the sense St. John spoke of in the second reading:

We are God's children now. What we shall be has not yet been revealed but when it is, we will be like him...for we will see him as he is....the Good Shepherd.