

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday. The Church invites us to pause and reflect on the beautiful image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. It is a Sunday filled with hope and deep comfort, reminding us that we are not going through life alone, but are under the careful watch of a shepherd who knows each of us by name and leads us to life in abundance.

In today's Gospel (John 10:1-10), Jesus describes himself not only as the shepherd but also as the gate of the sheepfold. In the ancient world, the shepherd would often sleep across the entrance of the sheepfold, literally becoming the gate to protect the flock from predators and thieves. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus will not abandon his flock. He is willing to die to protect his sheep. In fact, Jesus did die on the cross for his flock. He laid down his life so that we, his sheep, might be able to live. But even in death Jesus did not abandon us. He is still with us as our Good Shepherd, leading us to where we need to be.

Today the Church throughout the world prays for vocations. As Catholics, we firmly believe that God has a plan for each of us. He calls some to marriage, some to the priesthood, others to the diaconate, and others to religious life or to live as generous single people. Fully living our own vocations—and teaching young people how to discern God's call—is a serious duty, but also a joyful one. In his message for the 63rd World Day of Prayer for Vocations, titled "The Interior Discovery of God's Gift," Pope Leo XIV defines vocation as a "path of beauty" and a personal adventure of love rather than a strict imposition. He emphasizes cultivating interior life, silence, and prayer to discover God's call.

During this week, we pray specially for those discerning the priesthood, religious life, and other vocations in the Church. We pray for the priests who have ministered to us throughout our life, both living and dead. Let us join together asking the Lord to send laborers into his harvest! Let us encourage young people – our children, grandchildren, students, and friends – to be open if God calls them to priesthood or religious life. Finally, let us remember that we are all called to be "shepherds" in our own fields—whether as parents, teachers, or coworkers. May we always guide others with the same tenderness and sacrifice that Jesus has shown us.

Fr. Luke