



The Holy See

MORNING MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF THE
DOMUS SANCTAE MARTHAE HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

“The meekness and tenderness of the Good Shepherd”

Sunday, 3rd May 2020

[[Multimedia](#)]

Introduction

Three weeks after the Resurrection of the Lord, the Church today in the fourth week of Easter celebrates Good Shepherd Sunday, Jesus the Good Shepherd. This makes me think of the many pastors throughout the world who give their lives for the faithful. Even in this pandemic, many of them, more than a hundred have died here in Italy. I also think of other pastors who are taking care of the good of others: doctors. We speak of doctors and what they do, but we must acknowledge that in Italy alone, 154 doctors have died in service. May the example of these pastors who are priests and doctors help us to take care of the Holy people of God.

Homily

The First Letter of the apostle Peter, which we have heard, is a passage of serenity (see 2:20-25). It talks about Jesus. It says, “He Himself bore our sins in His body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls” (vv. 24-25).

Jesus is the shepherd - this is how Peter sees Him - who comes to save, to save the sheep which had gone astray: they were us. And in Psalm 23, which we read after this letter, we repeated: “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want” (v. 1). The presence of the Lord as a pastor, as

a shepherd of the flock. And Jesus, in chapter 10 of John, which we have read, presents Himself as a shepherd. Moreover, not only as the shepherd, but the “door” through which the flock enters (see v. 8). All those who came before and did not enter through that door were thieves and brigands, or wanted to take advantage of the flock: false pastors. And in the history of the Church there have been many who have exploited the flock. They were interested not in the flock, but in advancing their careers, or politics, or money. But the flock recognises them, has always recognised them, and has gone in search of God on their own path.

But then there is a good shepherd who leads them ahead, the flock advances. The good shepherd listens to the flock, guides the flock, takes care of the flock. And the flock knows how to distinguish between these shepherds, it makes no mistake. The flock entrusts itself to the good shepherd, it entrusts itself to Jesus. Only the pastor who resembles Jesus can earn the trust of the flock, because He is the *door*. Jesus’s style must be the style of the shepherd, there is no other. But even Jesus the good shepherd, as Peter says in the first letter, “Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way He took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in His mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when He was tortured He made no threats” (1 Pt 2:21-23). He was meek. One of the signs of the Good Shepherd is *meekness*. The Good Shepherd is meek. A pastor who is not meek is not a good pastor. He has something to hide, because meekness makes itself seen as it is, without defending itself. In addition, a good shepherd is tender; he has that *tenderness of closeness*, he knows the sheep one by one, by name, and he takes care of each one as if it were the only one, to the point that when he returns home tired after a day of work, and realises that one is missing, he goes out to work again in search of that one, and carries it back home with him, on his shoulders (see Lk 15:4-5). This is a good shepherd, this is Jesus, this is the one who accompanies us all on the path of life. And this idea of the pastor, this idea of the flock and of the sheep, is a Paschal idea. The Church, in the first week of Easter, sings that beautiful hymn for the newly baptised. “These are the new lambs”. Similar to what we heard at the beginning of the Mass. It is an idea of community, of tenderness, of goodness, of meekness. It is the Church that Jesus wants, and He guards this Church.

This Sunday is a beautiful Sunday, it is a Sunday of peace, it is a Sunday of tenderness, of meekness, because our Shepherd takes care of us. “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want” (Ps 23).

Spiritual Communion

Those who cannot receive communion can now make a spiritual communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if you were already there, and I unite

myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

Words at the end of the Mass

I would like to thank the Christian Associations of Italian Workers, which provided this beautiful statue of Saint Joseph to accompany us in the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker.

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