

Forming Good Stewards

Good stewards are formed by other good stewards!

*Please make sure this is distributed to the **pastor**, to the other **priest** and **deacons** in the parish, and to the **person who produces the bulletin**.*

Bulletin Bites

May 7, 2017

Fourth Sunday of Easter

John 10:1-10

Option 1

“The shepherd walks ahead of his sheep, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice.”

Our image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd romanticizes the role and status of the shepherd.. However, Jesus was well aware that the life of a shepherd was very difficult and they were considered to be on the low level of society. Then, as today, they were called bedouins, which means “nomads.” They moved from place to place to find food and water for their flock and the flock is totally dependent on the shepherd for protection from predators and thieves. The shepherd depended on the flock for milk, meat, and wool. Such mutual dependence establishes a strong bond between shepherd and flock. Like the good shepherd and great leaders of history, Jesus lead from the front, with wisdom and courage. Jesus used the image of shepherd and sheep to teach the people of his day, and us, that he will always lead us to what is right and good, and we can follow him in confidence and have faith in him.

Option 2

“I came so that you might have life, and have it more abundantly.”

The care of sheep in the Holy Land and elsewhere has not changed in thousands of years. Wherever you see a sheep you see a shepherd. Sheep have no natural defenses against predators, and might even die if not lead to food and water. Sheep know the voice of their shepherds and shy from strangers. When possible, sheep are kept in a pen with a gate. Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd, and in today’s Gospel, to the gate. We are compared to the sheep, which is not very flattering. But it is the relationship of shepherd and sheep, and the function of the gate, that is important. Jesus, as true God and true man, is the source of all that we are, and have, and will be. He is our provider, protector and savior. It is our responsibility to know His voice and to respond with gratitude expressed in generosity to others. We *pass through* Jesus to a more abundant life by imitating Him and by loving one another as He loved us.

May 14, 2017
Fifth Sunday of Easter
John 14:1-12

Option 1
Thomas said to him,

“Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?”

Although he had followed Jesus for several years, Thomas had some questions. But we should not judge him too harshly. Remember, when the other disciples cautioned Jesus not to go near Jerusalem to visit Lazarus and his sisters, it was Thomas who said, “Let us go die with him.” So when Jesus said, “Where I am going you know the way” it is understandable that Thomas was not sure what he meant. Thomas did not say “What will happen to me?” or “I won’t go.” He did not lack faith in Jesus. He was willing to die with him. He did not yet understand the details and he had the courage to speak up. In his homily on April 3, 2014 Pope Francis said “Prayer should be like speaking face-to-face with a friend: without fear, freely and also with insistence” and “Don't hold back when praying to God -- tell him exactly what's wrong and insist on holding him to his promises.” That is what Thomas did. During this season of Easter that is how we should pray to God - face to face, friend to friend, on a first-name basis with Jesus.

Option 2
“Do not let your hearts be troubled.
You have faith in God; have faith also in me”

At his last supper with his disciples Jesus washed their feet and said, *“I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.”* Then, *“I give you a new commandment: Love one another; as I have loved you, so you should also love one another.”* He was teaching them the essential beliefs of a Eucharistic people in a Triune God. After supper he spent several hours in agonizing prayer. He was then cruelly betrayed, unjustly arrested, brutally tortured, savagely crucified, and hurriedly buried. But he rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples and said, *Peace be with you!* A week later, he appeared again and said *“Peace be with you!”* His message was mysterious but simple. *Do not be troubled; if you believe in God, believe in me. If you love one another as I have loved you and do for others what I have done for you, my peace will be with you and you will do the works I do, and even greater.* How do we imitate Jesus? What have we done for others? Is the *Peace of Jesus* with us?

May 21, 2017
Sixth Sunday of Easter
John 14:15-21

Option 1

“Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.”

Jesus knew that after he ascended to heaven many would attempt to complicate his existence, mission and message. He was aware that from the time of Moses people tried to avoid or deny the nature of God and his simple command to love God and to love other as we love ourselves. He knew that if we can be convinced that love of God and others is complicated, we would get discouraged and give up. He anticipated that some would claim to have superior and exclusive

knowledge of how to love God in order to gain control over the mind and lives of others. Jesus assured us that loving God by understanding and observing his commandments, and loving others, is not complicated, but it can be difficult. It requires that we do right, not just look right; do good, not just feel good. It means we must eliminate evil in our lives and challenge the evil in our world, our community, our work place, our home. That can be inconvenient, unpleasant and risky. And that takes love.

Option 2

**“ . . . I will ask my Father and He will give you another Advocate
to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth . . . ”**

Today’s Gospel continues with the *Last Supper Discourse*. Jesus leaves no room for ambiguity: “*If you love me you will keep my commandments.*” For his part, Jesus promises, “*I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees him nor knows him.*” Our God created us, keeps us in existence, lived like us died for us, rose from the dead as our guarantee of eternal life, and is with us always. As the popular song proclaims, *Our God is an Awesome God. He reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power and might. Our God is an Awesome God.* How can we respond to such an *Awesome God*? Our response is to acknowledge, accept, develop and use all that God created us to be *for own benefit and enjoyment, and for the benefit and enjoyment of others*. If we listen carefully, we may be able to hear Jesus shout, “*That is awesome!*”

May 28, 2017

Seventh Sunday of Easter

John 17:1-11

Option 1

**“And now I will no longer be in the world,
but they are in the world while I am coming to you.”**

Jesus prays to his Father during the “Last Supper Discourse” in St. John’s Gospel. He takes this last opportunity with his disciples to prepare them for the impending fate that awaits him for teaching about God’s love and how we can truly love God. Gathered in an upper room to celebrate the Passover Jesus speaks to his Father, but he is communicating to his disciples that the time is near when he will no longer be physically with them, but he will be with them in the Spirit the Father will send so that they will understand all that he did and said, and have the courage to imitate him and bring his message to others by their words and actions. At the Last Supper the disciples did not fully understand all that Jesus was trying to tell them. But after his death and Resurrection the Spirit was upon them and they began to live as he taught them. Do we understand Jesus did and said and do we have the courage to imitate him?

Option 2

“I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the *work* you gave me to do.”

Jesus spoke these words as part of his prayer to the Father for his disciples at the Last Supper just before he went to the Garden of Gethsemane. What was the *work* the Father had given Jesus to accomplish on earth to glorify Him? Part of that *work* was to be a living, breathing, walking, talking example and model to show us how we can accomplish the *work* the Father has given to

each of *us*. For each of us that *work* is different. Each of us has received from God a vast array of talents, abilities and gifts that are unique. Each of us has a unique life experience. It is precisely because we are unique that we must identify, accept, develop and use all that God created us to be. And we must share what God has given to us with others. When we meet God face to face will we be able to say, “I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the *work* you gave me to do?”

Solemnity of the Ascension
Matthew 28:16-20

Option 1

“Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations . . .”

After his resurrection Jesus revealed himself to his disciples who had been his most faithful followers to prepare them for the day when he would return to his Father and no longer be physically with them. Jesus knew it would take time for them to fully realize the meaning of all they had seen and heard; they would be uncertain and fearful about how to proceed with out him to lead and teach them; they would have to choose whether or not to accept the task of carrying on his mission and teaching others his message by their words and actions. After they saw Jesus ascend to his Father they banded together in anxiety and uncertainty. We may be tempted to judge them harshly for their lack of faith and courage. But what would we have done? They believed in Jesus but they had witnessed many unusual and frightening things. They stayed together and resolved their doubts and conquered their fears. When we have doubts and fears do we stay together? Do we spend time in prayer to resolve our doubts and act with courage?

Option 2

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!”

The details and location of the Ascension are shrouded in mystery. St. Matthew tells of the commissioning of the disciples but does not describe an ascension. He concludes with Jesus’ words, “And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Mark says simply that “ the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up to heaven” Luke places the event at Bethany and says Jesus raised his hands and blessed the disciples and “parted from them and was taken up to heaven.” John makes no mention of an ascension. In the beginning of the Book of Acts Luke suggest that Jesus and his apostles were in Jerusalem where he gave them some final instructions and adds, “as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.” One thing seems clear: Jesus was no longer visibly with his apostles but he left to them, and through them to us, the responsibility to spread his message and complete his mission. The question for us is: *How are we doing with that?* Some day, somewhere, Jesus will ask.