

Easter 4A 2014
The Good Shepherd and the Vocation of Motherhood

This Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally called Good Shepherd Sunday; for every year on this Sunday the Gospel focuses our attention on Jesus the Good Shepherd. But this year, on this Sunday, we are also celebrating Mother's Day, a day when we remember and celebrate our mothers. Although Mother's Day rarely occurs on Good Shepherd Sunday, there is an intimate connection between Jesus the Good Shepherd and motherhood. For, just as Jesus the Good Shepherd calls us by name and gives us life, so our mothers were the first to call us by name and give life.

To know another by name is to begin a relationship with that person. When we call another person by name, we begin to grow in friendship and intimacy. And so it is with Christ. Christ knows us intimately and personally because he has called us by name. And because he calls us by name, he loves us; and because he loves us, he surrenders his life for us.

Every mother instinctively knows what it means to call her child by name; for she was the first to call her child by name. And so when she calls her child by name, she knows something personal and intimate about her child that no one else knows; she knows something that no one else can know. She knows who this child is.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd because he leads us to green pastures; he gives us a share in his own life. He lays down his life for us so that we can enjoy his resurrection life. He lays down his life for us so that we can enjoy God's own life. He lays down his life for us so that we will have the fullness of life.

Every mother knows what it means to give life. She understands that the greatest gift she can give is the gift of new life. Every mother reflects the care and love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, because like the Good Shepherd she dedicates her life to her child. Like the Good Shepherd, she gives the whole of her life for her children. Like the Good Shepherd, she brings her children to the fullness of life by caring and watching over them.

Motherhood is an exalted vocation. It is the way mothers share in the ministry of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Every time a mother cares for her children, she reflects the love of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Every time a mother gives of herself, she reflects the love of Jesus the Good Shepherd. What is true for every mother is true for all those women who have never borne children of their own but exercise the gift of spiritual motherhood by caring and nurturing others. Such women are also mothers; they too are good shepherds.

It is a joy and a grace for me to extend a most blessed and happy Mother's Day to all of the mothers of our parish. For in and through their love and dedication, they reflect the love of Jesus the Good Shepherd.