

## FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This weekend is Good Shepherd Sunday. We hear Jesus call Himself the “Good Shepherd”. He says that the “good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Have you thought about this lately? You are worth it! He gave everything for you. He looks at you, and His own life, and He chose you; He wants you to live! That’s amazing.

This Sunday is also *World Day of Prayer for Vocations*. While each person has a vocation – a calling from God to follow Him – we often look at vocations to mean a priestly or religious call. My own journey to the priesthood began by looking at the good priests I knew, and seeing how they laid down their lives for the Church. I admired them, and saw them as heroes, of a sort. This inspired me at the ripe old age of ten to tell my parents that I wanted to be a priest when I grew up.

As my vocation matured and changed over the years, one thing I always kept in sight was that if I was to be a shepherd – a good shepherd – I needed to lay down my life for the sheep of the parishes to which I was assigned. This is a very romantic idea when it is in the abstract, but the practical day to day living is not so easy. Let’s be honest, when the phone rings after I am in bed – for the third time – it is not easy to die to myself and charitably answer. When *that annoying person* (you know, priests can get annoyed, too) comes to talk to me, it is hard to smile and respond with love. And more than this, when I see wolves coming after the sheep, it is difficult to cry out “DANGER!” when they don’t want to hear it, and shout at me that I am keeping them from their freedom. Yet, in all of this, I know that this is the call – to lay down my life for the sheep, for I *must* imitate the Good Shepherd, Jesus.

I was at Bishop Guertin a couple of weeks ago, sharing my vocation story and answering questions about Catholicism. One question that was asked about my vocation was: “Is it worth it?” The answer is a resounding, “YES!” Following God’s call always has great rewards, even if they are not tangible in this life. Even the call to take up our crosses, to die to ourselves, to lay down our lives for others – this call truly brings life.

I ask you this day (and every day) to pray for our priests and religious; we need your prayers to keep us faithful to the call to die to ourselves for you. Please also pray for more good priests and religious to take up the call to be a hero – a hero in the everyday, ordinary things of life, a hero that looks to live for others rather than self. Join me in this prayer:

**O God, Father of all Mercies,  
Provider of a bountiful Harvest,  
send Your Graces upon those  
You have called to gather the fruits of Your labor;  
preserve and strengthen them in their lifelong service of you.**

**Open the hearts of Your children  
that they may discern Your Holy Will;  
inspire in them a love and desire to surrender themselves  
to serving others in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Teach all Your faithful to follow their respective paths in life  
guided by Your Divine Word and Truth.  
Through the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary,  
all the Angels, and Saints, humbly hear our prayers  
and grant Your Church's needs, through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**