



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

Saint Peter's Square

Fourth Sunday of Easter, 26 April 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

This day, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, called “Good Shepherd Sunday”, invites us each year to rediscover, with ever new astonishment, how Jesus defined himself, reading it again in the light of his passion, death and resurrection. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11): these words are wholly fulfilled when Christ, freely obeying the will of the Father, is immolated on the Cross. The significance that He is “the Good Shepherd” thus becomes completely clear: He gives life, He offered his life in sacrifice for us all: for you, for you, for you, for me, for everyone! And for this reason He is the Good Shepherd!

Christ is the true shepherd, who fulfils the loftiest model of love for the flock: He freely *lays down* his own life, no one takes it from Him (cf. v. 18), but He *gives* it for the sheep (v. 17). In open opposition to false shepherds, Jesus presents himself as the one true shepherd of the people. A bad pastor thinks of himself and exploits the sheep; a good shepherd thinks of the sheep and gives himself. Unlike the mercenary, Christ the pastor is a careful guide who participates in the life of his flock, does not seek other interests, has no ambition other than guiding, feeding and protecting his sheep. All of this at the highest price, that of sacrificing his own life.

In the figure of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we contemplate the Providence of God, his paternal solicitude for each one of us. He does not leave us on our own! The result of this contemplation of Jesus the true and good Shepherd, is the exclamation of poignant astonishment that we find in the Second Reading of the day’s Liturgy: “See what love the Father has given us...” (1 Jn 3:1). It is truly a surprising and mysterious love, for by giving us Jesus as the Shepherd who gives his life for

us, the Father has given us all of the greatest and most precious that He could give us. It is the purest and most sublime love, for it is not motivated by necessity, is not conditioned on accounting, is not attracted by a self-interested desire for exchange. Before this love of God, we feel immense joy and we open ourselves to recognizing how much we have freely received.

But it is not enough to contemplate and give thanks. It is also necessary to *follow* the Good Shepherd. In particular, those whose mission is to be a guide in the Church — priests, bishops, popes — are called to take on not the mentality of manager but that of *servant*, in imitation of Jesus who, in emptying himself, saved us with his mercy. Also called to this way of pastoral life, that of a good shepherd, are the *new priests of the Diocese of Rome*, whom I had the joy of ordaining this morning in St Peter's Basilica.

Two of them are here to thank you for your prayers and to greet you ... *[two newly ordained priests appear at the window beside the Holy Father]*.

May Mary Most Holy obtain for me, for the bishops and for the priests of the entire world, the grace to serve the holy People of God through joyous preaching of the Gospel, heartfelt celebration of the Sacraments, and patient and gentle pastoral guidance.

After the Regina Caeli:

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to assure my closeness to the populations hit by a severe earthquake in Nepal and in bordering countries. I am praying for the victims, for the wounded and for all those who are suffering because of this disaster. May they have the support of fraternal solidarity. Let us pray that Our Lady be near them. "Hail Mary...".

Today, in Canada, being proclaimed Blessed is Maria Elisa Turgeon, Foundress of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in San Germano: an exemplary woman religious, devoted to prayer, to teaching in the small centres of her diocese, and to works of charity. Let us give thanks to the Lord for this woman, a model of life consecrated to God and of the generous commitment to the service of neighbours.

I warmly greet all the pilgrims from Rome, from Italy and from many countries, in particular the many who have come from Poland for the occasion of the first anniversary of the canonization of John Paul II. Beloved, may his call, "Open wide the doors for Christ!" — which he said with that strong and holy voice he had — always resound in your hearts. May the Lord bless you and your families, and may Our Lady protect you.

I wish a happy Sunday to all. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch! *Arrivederci!*

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