

- A happy Mothers' Day to all you mothers out there. We ask God's blessing upon all of you this day.
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- Now some of these images in our Gospel may seem a bit strange to the vast majority of us, for most of us have seen sheep only rarely, and certainly hardly any of us have seen a shepherd and how he works.
- But it would have been a daily image in Palestine, and that's one of the reasons why Jesus refers to that image of a shepherd so often.
- Even today in the Church the image lingers. "Pastor" is simply the Latin for a shepherd...and the bishop's crozier is patterned after a shepherd's staff.
- One of the oldest paintings of Christ, in the Roman catacombs, represents Jesus carrying the injured, straying sheep gently on his shoulders back to the sheepfold.
- And we are certainly fortunate to belong to the sheepfold of Christ—His Church.
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- But what about those shepherds?
- Palestine is a rocky country...and a shepherd's life was hard—a 24/7 existence of watching over the sheep in rain and shine, hot and cold, light and darkness.
- In the rocks and crags the sheep would wander and get lost, and the shepherd went out to find them...having to defend the sheep against wolves and other wild animals...against thieves and robbers. It was a life of constant vigilance and care.
- And the sheep were raised primarily for wool, and not for meat. And thus each would live for several years, and the shepherd knew each one of them...calling them by the names he gave them.

- The sheep then knew to trust the shepherd...and his sheep would follow only his particular call and sound of voice, and would not another's.
- So constant vigilance, fearless courage, patient love for his flock... these were the traits of a good shepherd.
- And what does Jesus mean when He says He is the gate for the sheep?
- When out in the fields, shepherds would have makeshift pens at night—often against a hillside or rocks...and one of them would lie across the entrance so that a sheep could not leave and, more importantly, nothing could enter to attack the sheep. This shepherd was called the gate for the sheep...and it was he who let in or let out of the sheepfold...watching out for the welfare of the sheep.
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- How often the Bible uses the image of the intrepid shepherd for God Himself!
- *“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...”* goes Psalm 23.
- *“He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”* (Isa 40:11 RSV)
- *As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep...”* (Eze 34:12 RSV)...and many, many more.
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- Jesus, of course, is the good shepherd...the shepherd who will risk—and give—His live for His sheep. For us.
- As Peter reminds us today in the second reading: *“He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross...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.”

- And in our Church this mantle of shepherd is passed on to the leaders of the Church...particularly to Peter and, subsequently, to the popes.
 - It is to Peter whom Jesus exhorted with the three-fold admonition: *“Feed my lambs...tend my sheep...feed my sheep”* at the end of John’s Gospel. And it was to Peter that Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom in Matthew 16.
 - And, as we read today, right after the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles at Pentecost, it is PETER who stands up and speaks for the Eleven apostles...the leader of the apostles.
 - Sadly...many today think they need no shepherd. But a sheep wander alone simply become prey for whatever will consume it.
 - And the devil and his agents—whether they be spirit or human—are always hungry...always seeking the blood of new victims.
 - So stay close to our shepherd; it is He and only He who will lead us safely to everlasting life.
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- This is one of—if not THE—most important role of you parents... to teach God’s lambs that He has given you to always follow their protecting and loving shepherd.
- Now you mothers today are rightfully honored for your role in the family—the honor and unparalleled privilege of bringing forth new images of God from yourselves...feeding and nurturing, teaching, healing, and loving. Even the angels cannot do this!
- That’s why, you young people: Keep your sexuality safe and sacred...because it is.

- But while you bask in the love of your children and grandchildren, I want you to do a little introspection.
- Are you being the best mother you can be? Are you teaching your children truly the way of God...by word AND example.
- Yours is “*the hand that rocks the cradle*”. There is no influence before yours...there is no influence greater than yours.
- We see how we morph into our parents as we age. Be the parent that you want your children to be...for especially your daughters will become you.
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- And how is a woman a good mother?
- Through tenderness...through caring...through wisdom...through prayer...and most of all, through trust and obedience to the will of God.
- In other words...to walk in the steps of Our Blessed Mother.
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- And remember, you sons and daughters, how the wisest of men and most powerful of the Israelite kings—King Solomon, who was simply a weak foreshadowing of Jesus—how he honored his own mother...as we read in 1 Kings: “...*the king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; then he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the king's mother; and she sat on his right. Then she said, "I have one small request to make of you; do not refuse me." And the king said to her, "Make your request, my mother; for I will not refuse you."* (1 Kings 2:19-20)

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- So today...remember your mother...the tenderness, the caring, the love that she has given you...and honor her, as God would have you do.
- And...for those who now see your mother only in memory's eye... you may hear across the years this song of times past...
- Over in Killarney, many years ago
Mi mother sang a song to me
in tones so sweet and low
Just a simple little ditty
in her good old Irish way
And I'd give the world if she could sing
that song to me this day

Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li,
Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, hush now, don't you cry!
Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, Too-ra-loo-ra-li,
Too-ra-loo-ra-loo-ral, that's an Irish lullaby.

- Happy Mothers' Day.

Reading 1

[Acts 2:14a, 36-41](#)

Then *Peter* stood up with the Eleven,
raised his voice, and proclaimed:
“Let the whole house of Israel know for certain
that God has made both Lord and Christ,
this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart,
and they asked Peter and the other apostles,
“What are we to do, my brothers?”
Peter said to them,
“Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
For the promise is made to you and to your children
and to all those far off,
whomever the Lord our God will call.”
He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them,
“Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”
Those who accepted his message were baptized,
and about three thousand persons were added that day.

[Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b4, 5, 6](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

or:

R. Alleluia.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

or:

R. Alleluia.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side.
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

or:

R. Alleluia.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

or:

R. Alleluia.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

or:

R. Alleluia.

[1 Pt 2:20b-25](#)

Reading 2

Beloved:

**If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good,
this is a grace before God.**

For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult;
when he suffered, he did not threaten;
instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.

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.

[Jn 10:1-10](#)

Gospel

Jesus said:

“Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate
but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.
But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.
The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice,
as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
When he has driven out all his own,
he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,
because they recognize his voice.
But they will not follow a stranger;
they will run away from him,
because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”
Although Jesus used this figure of speech,
the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you,
I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;
I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”