

- First of all, the restrictions during the flu season have been lifted, so we'll have the cups of the Precious Blood at communion today, and you can receive the host on the tongue if you wish. Also, we can give the sign of peace as normal.
- Secondly, this is Confirmation weekend for some of our youth, so keep them in prayer as they receive this final sacrament of initiation—this “affirmation” of their faith, and given even greater grace from the Holy Spirit.
- We just heard Jesus call Himself the Good Shepherd, but we all help to shepherd our neighbor by our prayers and example—especially our young people who are assaulted daily by values of the world which are so often opposed to the truth of Christ.

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- The two sacraments which are probably least understood generally by people are confirmation and anointing of the sick.
  - Confirmation is, of course, the final sealing of the person with the fullness of grace of the Holy Spirit...and has its basis in the Acts of the Apostles, where we hear: “...*when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.*” (Acts 8:14-17) Ergo...Confirmation.

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- Anointing of the sick has its foundation primarily in two New Testament texts.
  - First from Mark's Gospel, after Jesus sends the apostles out to preach and cure: “...*they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.*” (Mark 6:13)
  - And in the letter of James even more specifically, where we hear: “*Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [priests] of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord and the prayer of faith will save the sick man,*

*and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” (James 5:14-15)*

- But the Church teaches that anointing isn't for just any old sickness, but when life is in possible danger, including significant operations, and even elderly people who may simply be in danger of succumbing from weakness even from lesser illness.

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- Now, last rites includes anointing of the sick, but has some other important blessings and absolutions attached to it—including the pardoning of all temporal punishment due to sins one may have committed in life.
  - Last rites, of course, are given near death. But you need not wait until the person's last breath before you call! If you think a person may depart within a day or two, that is quite sufficient.
  - And, by the way, the Church grants a plenary indulgence to anyone at the hour of death who has had the habit of prayer in his life and is in a state of grace (no mortal sin)...so be comforted if someone dies unexpectedly and unattended, yet call the priest if you can before death whenever you are able.

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- Now we all have nature's fear of death—if not the great unknown, it is the great unexperienced.
  - Even those who we say have “come back from death”...we don't really know how deeply in death and away from this life they were. We rely on machines and indicators to tell us when death occurs, but they cannot tell us when the soul departs definitively.
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  - But, really...we need only fear death if we have something to fear after death...and if we always live righteously in accord with the will of God, we are able to repeat with St. Paul: *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me...My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.”* (Philippians 1:21-23)...
  - *“...For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God...eternal in the heavens. Here indeed*

*we groan, and long to put on our heavenly dwelling...so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life... ” (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)*

- *“...we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord...we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.” (2 Corinthians 5:8-10)*

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- Now, in our day, some people worry because a Catholic relative or friend was not given a Catholic funeral because of prejudices of relatives or some such...but our eternal destination is not determined by the actions of another.
  - The Church teaches that we receive our own particular judgment at the moment of (real, permanent) death. If in Heaven, that's where I am for all eternity; if in Hell...tragically, the same.
  - The only flux is in Purgatory, where those bound for Heaven are “purged” of any imperfections they had at death.
  - This is where the importance of the funeral Mass comes in, as is for ALL prayers for the deceased, because—according to 2 Maccabees 12 specifically—such dead are assisted by our prayers toward eternal bliss...to which ALL in Purgatory eventually attain at some time determined by God.

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- And so...we trust and follow our Good Shepherd...we hear Him and follow His voice, for He has lain down His life for His sheep.
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  - Bishops, and priests who are pastors of parishes, are shepherds, too; that's what “*pastor*” means in Latin.
  - But, really...we're more like the shepherd's sheepdogs...nipping at your heels, trying to guide you by the instructions given us by the shepherd.
  - And yet you parents especially are pastors of your own little flocks as well...their earthly “guardian angels”.

- As difficult as it may be to believe...and as little as they might want to admit it...your little lambs' souls nevertheless beseech you in their depths:

*Mom and Dad, My guardians dear  
To Whom His love commits me here;  
Ever this day be at my side  
To light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen*

- So you, too, be good shepherds...leading your little ones to the good pasture of the Gospel...the sweet grazing of the Church.

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- One of the earliest paintings of Christ in the Roman catacombs depicts Jesus carrying an injured lamb on his shoulders...an image of God's tenderness, of His compassion...of His love for each of us.
  - Because on the shepherd's shoulders He carries His faithful flock to a place of care, security and good pasture...where there will be nothing I shall want...where He restoreth my soul...and where goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and [where] I shall dwell in the house of the LORD...forever. (Psalm 23)

Reading 1 [Acts 4:8-12](#)

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said:  
"Leaders of the people and elders:  
If we are being examined today  
about a good deed done to a cripple,  
namely, by what means he was saved,  
then all of you and all the people of Israel should know  
that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean  
whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead;  
in his name this man stands before you healed.  
He is *the stone rejected by you, the builders,  
which has become the cornerstone.*  
There is no salvation through anyone else,  
nor is there any other name under heaven  
given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29](#)

R. (22) **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,  
for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
than to trust in princes.

R. **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my savior.

The stone which the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;  
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;  
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me  
and have been my savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
for his kindness endures forever.

R. **The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Reading II [1 Jn 3:1-2](#)

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us  
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us  
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;  
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,  
for we shall see him as he is.

Gospel [Jn 10:11-18](#)

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd  
and whose sheep are not his own,  
sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away,  
and the wolf catches and scatters them.

This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd,  
and I know mine and mine know me,  
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;  
and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.  
These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,  
and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

This is why the Father loves me,  
because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.

I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.

This command I have received from my Father."