

Cycle B 4th Sunday of Easter

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.

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.

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.

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.

Reading 2 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."

“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.”

Years ago, not even a year into my career, I knew I didn't want to be an electrical engineer for the rest of my life. I came to realize that two things did interest me however: high-tech Marketing and creating successful products. And so I embarked to be a student of Management and get my MBA in Marketing before I was 30 years old. Over the years my absolute favorite jobs were leading Product Management teams creating innovative, and valued products and services. The engineers thought I was a salesman, and the salesmen thought I was an engineer. But as strange as it may sound, it wasn't until later in my career that I came to realize that I should not have focused so much time on being a student of Management...of reading all those books about corporate management. I should have been much more a student of Leadership, and taken more time to nurture relationships with leaders around me. And, it took me more than a couple of years to understand that we Deacons are called to “lead from the second chair”....and, it's not the Bishop or Pope in the first chair, or my wife, if you know what I mean. Today's Gospel is a great lesson explaining just that.

Back in Jesus' time everyone knew about shepherds, and how shepherds and sheep interacted with each other. Not so much today. Few of us have ever watched shepherds tending sheep. But if we think of shepherding as leadership we can get a better grasp of what that means for us in our time. Today Jesus is telling us that shepherding and leadership have similar dynamics in our relationships with others, particularly in caring for others as God would have us.

The shepherds of our day, to name a few, are parents and grandparents, coaches, teachers, clergy, and possibly even managers and executives where we work. If anyone is placed

under our supervision or care, then we are in the position to be a Shepherd. God loves us so much that He wants us to be the best Shepherds we can be.

Good Shepherds want those who are in their charge to succeed, to grow in competence, and to advance. Their own success is found in the success of those under their supervision.

Good Shepherds have sound character. They stand for something and exert a positive influence on others. Good leaders make choices knowing that they will be accountable to others as well as accountable to themselves.

Good Shepherds continuously form their consciences with God so that they will know what is right and what is wrong. Good Shepherds know their own limitations. They are people who are comfortable with and at peace with themselves. For Shepherds it's not about them; it's about those in their care.

I could easily go on, but the effective shepherding and leadership skills I have pointed out today, you may have noticed are more spiritual than worldly. They are skills based on Pope Francis' attitude and approach to his relationship with people around the world. He recognizes that we all are the Children of God...even those outside our fold, our church, our race, our tribe. Pope Francis is evidence that Good Shepherds are Good Leaders... and Good Leaders are Good Shepherds...you see, he too recognizes that it's Jesus in the first chair.

In his years as our Pope, Pope Francis has been calling us to serve a purpose greater than ourselves...to get over self-interests and devote ourselves to the concerns of others....to be Shepherds...to be Christian Leaders. That means we can't sit in the pews of our own sanitized environments. Good Shepherds smell of the sheep and immerse themselves in the mud of human failures, human sins and human problems...even to others who may

not belong to our fold. As Pope Francis frequently says, Jesus sends us out to the peripheries of human life, to where people are living, to understand what they are going through before we can offer any solutions that will matter. I mean, how can we help others until we know what help they truly need? And how else will they hear the voice of Jesus?

If you want to experience what I've been talking about, volunteer at a food pantry to meet people in dire need...or a prison ministry to lead a bible study in a very dark place...or join me to form a Haiti ministry here at St Andrew to reach out to our brothers and sisters who have lost hope....you may surprise yourself to find that Jesus is already there and that you are helping others discover that as well!

When we devote our efforts to all of those who God has placed in our lives, in our care, to help them develop and succeed in all their endeavors as they journey through life, then rest assured they will know Jesus is active in their lives. When we treat each person in our lives as a uniquely dignified individual, a person made in God's image and likeness, beloved by God and precious in His sight.... that is when we will have become better Christian Leaders...and the very best Shepherds that we can possibly be!