

Good Shepherd Sunday 2022

Homily of Bishop Barres

May 7-8, 2022

Today we celebrate **Good Shepherd Sunday**, the **World Day of Prayer for Vocations** and **Mother's Day**.

We pray globally on this Good Shepherd Sunday that the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, may guide the suffering people of Ukraine and the suffering refugees in Poland and Russia and lead every troubled region of the world to the peace and victory of the Risen Christ. May the Glorified Wounds of the Risen Christ touch the wounds of the world.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, we pray for our Holy Father, Pope Francis, the Successor of St. Peter and the Servant of the Servants of God.

We pray for our Bishops, Successors of the Apostles, and our link through Apostolic Succession to Peter and the Apostles, and ultimately to Christ Himself.

We pray for the holiness and missionary spirit of our priests and we pray for a rich harvest of vocations to the priesthood and religious life in the Diocese of Rockville Centre and throughout the universal Church.

We pray for our permanent deacons and their witness of sacrificial charity.

We pray for our transitional deacons – **Deacon Louis Cona, Deacon Chris Heller and Deacon Stephen Rooney**. I will ordain them to the Catholic priesthood on June 18, 2022. Pray that, with the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, they may be holy and inspiring Good Shepherds.

The biblical image of the Good Shepherd applies to the Church's hierarchy in service to the People of God.

But it is also a powerful and compelling image for living the Sacrament of Marriage and Family life in a spirit of "holiness and mission."

The Good Shepherd biblically in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is an image of tenderness, mercy, compassion, and empathy but it is also an image of firm guidance, fortitude, loyalty, steadfastness, strength and protection against evil.

Wives and Husbands living the Sacrament of Marriage live the biblical image of the Good Shepherd in a powerful way.

How? Spouses in marriage “shepherd” and inspire each other in virtue, character, fidelity, integrity, “holiness and mission”, and ultimately to Heaven and Eternal Life.

In fact, as young adults discern marriage, a key dimension of the discernment are these questions: Will this person help to inspire me to holiness, fidelity and a Catholic missionary spirit. Will this person help me to go to Heaven? Will this person and our future marriage be a source of inspiration to others since marriage is a fundamentally missionary vocation?

Another dimension of the Good Shepherd biblical image applied to the Sacrament of Marriage is the call of husbands and wives to shepherd their children in the Catholic faith.

Consider these texts from the Catholic baptismal rite:

1)After the parents request the Sacrament of Baptism for their child, they are asked: “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him/her in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him/her up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?”

2)At the “Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith”, the Priest or Deacon says to the parents and godparents: “On your part, you must make it your constant care to bring him/her up in the practice of the faith. See that the divine life which God gives him/her is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in his/her heart. If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility, renew now the vows of your own baptism. Reject sin; profess your faith in Christ Jesus. This is the faith of the Church. This is the faith in which this child is about to be baptized.”

3)At the end of the Baptismal Rite, during the Blessing of the Father, the priest or deacon prays: “God is the giver of all life, human and divine. May he bless the father of this child. He and his wife will be the first teachers of their child in the ways of faith. May they be also the best of teachers, bearing witness to the faith by what they say and do, in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Husbands and wives shepherd their children in prayer and a love for the Catholic Mass, the Sacrament of Penance and all the Sacraments.

Husbands and wives shepherd their children biblically so that their Catholic imaginations, hearts, minds and souls are formed with the great stories, the inspirational biblical figures and teachings of the Old Testament and New Testament,

Husbands and wives shepherd their children in the Ten Commandments and Catholic moral teaching helping to form their consciences with the truth at an early age.

Husbands and wives shepherd their children to love and serve the poor and suffering, and to celebrate the Gospel of Human Life, our belief as Catholics expressed courageously and humbly that the sanctity of human life is the foundation of every other human right.

And so, we proclaim together on this Good Shepherd Sunday and on this Mother's Day when we seek the intercession of Our Lady for all mothers:

Long live the Gospel of Human Life!

Long live the Catholic Church's prophetic witness to the Gospel of Human Life in the United States of America and throughout the world!

Long live the Religious Liberty and Conscience Rights of all Americans and all citizens of the World!

Happy Good Shepherd Sunday and Happy Mother's Day!