

#### **IV Sunday of Easter > Homily ~ April 25, 2026.**

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, as we also mark the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, the Church places before us a simple but powerful image: Christ as the Good Shepherd, and we as His flock.

From the beginning of Scripture, God reveals Himself as a shepherd. In Psalm 23 we hear, “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” This is not poetry alone - it is a promise. God knows us, leads us, protects us, and provides for us.

In the first reading, Saint Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and speaks as a shepherd for the first time. He calls people to repentance, to faith in Jesus, and to Baptism. He opens the gate of the new flock - the Church. Already we see what a shepherd does: he gathers, guides, and leads others to salvation.

In the Gospel, Jesus Christ gives us two images. First, He is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep and lays down His life for them. Second, He is the gate - the only way into eternal life. This means our relationship with Him is not distant or abstract. It is personal, intimate, and life-giving.

So what does this mean for us?

First, we are called to be good shepherds. Not only priests or bishops, but parents, teachers, caregivers, and anyone entrusted with others. A good shepherd does not dominate; he serves. He gives time, attention, and love. He protects the vulnerable and guides with patience. If someone depends on you - even in a small way - you are called to reflect Christ the Shepherd.

Second, we are called to be good sheep. That may sound passive, but it is not. To be a good sheep means to listen - to recognize the voice of Christ amid the noise of the world. We hear His voice in Scripture, in the teachings of the Church, and through our pastors. It also means staying close to the flock - our parish community - nourished by the Eucharist and the Sacraments.

Third, today especially, we are asked to pray for vocations. The Church needs shepherds: priests, deacons, and consecrated men and women who will dedicate their lives to serving God’s people. But prayer is not optional here - it is essential. Vocations are born in prayer, sustained by prayer, and fulfilled through prayer.

And perhaps the deeper question today is this: What is God calling me to be? A better shepherd? A more faithful sheep? Or even something more - a life dedicated entirely to Him?

The Good Shepherd is still calling. He knows your name. And He is leading you - if you are willing to listen.