



The Holy See

I will begin with a word in English and maybe another one in Italian.

The Gospel that we just heard on this Sunday of the Good Shepherd: My sheep listen to my voice, I know them and they follow me.

I think about the Good Shepherd, especially on this Sunday, which is so significant in Easter time. While we celebrate the beginning of this new mission of the ministry that the Church has called me to, there is no better example than Jesus Christ himself, to whom we give our lives and whom we depend on. Jesus Christ whom we follow, he is the Good Shepherd, and he is the one who gives us life: the way and the truth and the life. So we celebrate with joy this day and we deeply appreciate your presence here.

Today is Mother's Day. I think there is only one mother present: happy Mother's Day! One of the most wonderful expressions of the love of God is the love that is poured out by mothers, especially to their children and grandchildren.

This Sunday is known to be special for several different reasons: one of the first ones I would mention is vocations. During the recent work of the Cardinals, before and after the election of the new Pope, we spoke a lot about vocations in the Church and how important it is that all of us search together. First and foremost by giving [a] good example in our lives, with joy, living the joy of the Gospel, not discouraging others, but rather looking for ways to encourage young people to hear the voice of the Lord and to follow it and to serve in the Church. "I am the Good Shepherd", he tells us.

[In Italian] Now I will add just a word also in Italian, because this mission we carry forward is no longer to a single diocese, but to all the Church: this universal spirit is important. And we also find it in the first Reading we heard (*Acts* 13, 14:43-52). Paul and Barnabas go to Antioch; the Jews go first, but they do not want to listen to the voice of the Lord, and so they begin to announce the Gospel to all the world, to the pagans. They go, as we know, on this great mission. Saint Paul comes to Rome, where he also eventually [fulfilled] it. Another example of the witness of a good shepherd. But in that example, there is also a very special invitation to us all. I also said it in a very personal way, what it is to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world.

Take courage! Without fear! Many times in the Gospel Jesus says: “Do not be afraid”. We need to be courageous in the witness we give, with the world and above all with life: giving life, serving, sometimes with great sacrifices in order to live out this very mission.

I saw a little reflection that made me think a lot, because it also comes out in the Gospel. In this sense, someone asked: “When you think about your life, how do you explain where you have arrived?”. The answer they gave in this reflection is in a certain sense mine too, with the verb “to listen”. How important it is to listen! Jesus says, “My sheep listen to my voice”. And I think it is important for all of us to learn how to listen more, to enter into dialogue. First and foremost, with the Lord: always listen to the Word of God. Then also listen to others, to know how to build bridges, to know how to listen without judging, not closing the doors thinking that we have all the truth and no-one else can tell us anything. It is very important to listen to the voice of the Lord, to listen to it, in this dialogue, and to see where the Lord is calling us towards.

Walking together in the Church, let us ask the Lord to give us this grace of being able to listen to His Word, to serve all His people.

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