

Pastor's Letter

July 21, 2024—16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Church Family

What makes a good shepherd? Well one of the basic requirements is that you know how to keep the flock together. One way to do that is to make sure that the needs of the flock are met. If the flock is getting enough food and water and is being protected from predators, they are less likely to wander off. When a sheep does wander off it takes someone who knows how to strike the right balance of gentle coaxing and stern guidance to help them find their way back.

Throughout the history of God's revelation of himself to his people, he has used the image of a shepherd to describe how the leaders of his people should relate to them. That's why we call them pastors, from the Latin for shepherd. It is the job of pastors, both bishops and priests, to make sure that the community of faith under their care is spiritually fed and nourished by God's word and the sacraments. It's also the job of pastors to defend their people from the predations of those who would lead them away from God by false teaching or temptation of sin. A good pastor holds up the truth, goodness and beauty of the faith, reminding his people of the blessing that comes from being part of God's flock. He will also challenge his people, if necessary, to turn away from things that are not good for them. Sometimes that is not an easy or comfortable thing to do, but it is sometimes necessary.

A good shepherd also knows not just the flock as a whole, but each sheep as an individual. He gives to each what they need. In the 500's Pope St. Gregory the Great wrote an excellent book called "The Book of Pastoral Rule" in which he describes the different methods by which a pastor cares for his people. The basic idea is that being a pastor is an art, not a science. and the basic tool of the pastor is love. Please pray for me and for all our pastors that we will never forget that.

Blessings,

Fr. Scott