

# Pastor's Letter

**April 21, 2024—4th Sunday of Easter**

Dear Church Family,

I once heard an interview with Dr. Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University, talking about the differences between generations. In the course of the conversation, she mentioned that in 2012 there began to be a significant increase in mental health problems among teenagers and young adults. She also noted that this was first year that the majority of Americans had a smart phone and she believes that the two events are connected. The toxicity of social media, its unhealthy effects on sleeping habits and its undermining of real-life interaction and relationships have created what she called, “a perfect storm for depression.”

I don't want to sound like an old caveman, but I can't help believing that she is right. When we see all the bullying, lies, and hatred that people engage in online to get clicks it's hard to imagine that it could not have bad consequences for those who expose themselves to all that poison. Social media can be helpful and positive. We use it to communicate what's going on in our parishes. But just looking around in general at the media landscape, there are so many who are just trying to make themselves look good or trying to sell us something by making us feel bad about ourselves or angry at others. Is there anyone out there who really cares about us and wants the best for us?

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. Jesus tells us in our Gospel reading that he has come to give his life for us. He warns us against false shepherds who don't care about us and run away when the going gets tough. He, on the other hand, is the true shepherd, who knows us, loves us, and will never abandon us. He backed up this promise with actions. He went all the way to the cross for us. He defeated death and evil and now freely offers us life without end and joy without limits. He shows us the way and he himself is the way. When we stay close to him by living with love as he taught us, by prayer, and by receiving the graces of his sacraments, he keeps us safe from all the destructive forces around us.

With him as our shepherd and guide we have nothing to fear and every reason to live in hope.

Blessings,

Fr. Scott