The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA COELI

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 12 May 2019

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

In today's Gospel passage (cf. Jn 10:27-30) Jesus is presented to us as *the true Shepherd* of the People of God. He speaks about the relationship that binds him to the sheep of the flock, namely, to his disciples, and he emphasizes the fact that it is a relationship of mutual recognition. "My sheep" — he says — "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (vv. 27-28). In carefully reading this phrase, we see that Jesus' work is explained in several actions: Jesus *speaks*; Jesus *knows*; Jesus *gives eternal life*; Jesus *safeguards*.

The Good Shepherd — Jesus — is attentive to each one of us; he seeks us and loves us, addresses his Word to us, knowing the depths of our heart, our desires and our hopes, as well as our failures and disappointments. He accepts us and loves us as we are, with our merits and our faults. He "gives eternal life" to each one of us: that is, he offers us the opportunity to live a full life, without end. Moreover, he safeguards us and leads us lovingly, helping us to cross impervious paths and the sometimes dangerous roads that appear in life.

The verbs and actions that describe the way in which Jesus, the Good Shepherd, interacts with us correspond to the verbs that relate to the sheep, namely us: "*hear my voice*", "*follow me*". They are actions that show how we must correspond to the tender and caring attitudes of the Lord. Indeed, hearing and recognizing his voice, implies intimacy with him, which is strengthened in prayer, in the heart-to-heart encounter with the divine Master and Shepherd of our souls. This intimacy with

Jesus, this openness, speaking with Jesus, reinforces in us the desire to follow him, by emerging from the labyrinth of errant ways, abandoning selfish behaviour in order to set out on new paths of fraternity and of self-giving, in imitation of him.

Let us not forget that Jesus is the only Shepherd who speaks to us, knows us, gives us eternal life and safeguards us. We are the only flock and we only have to strive to hear his voice, while he lovingly examines the sincerity of our hearts. And from this constant intimacy with our Shepherd, from this colloquy with him, springs the joy of following him, allowing ourselves to be led to the fullness of eternal life.

Let us now turn to Mary, Mother of Christ the Good Shepherd. May she, who readily responded to God's call, help in particular those who are called to the priesthood and to consecrated life to joyfully and willingly accept Christ's call to be his more direct coworkers in proclaiming the Gospel and at the service of the Kingdom of God in this age of ours.

After the Regina Coeli, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters! Today "Mother's Day" is being celebrated in many countries. I would like to convey a special greeting to all mothers, thanking them — a round of applause for all the mothers! — for their precious work in raising children and in protecting the value of the family. Let us also remember the mothers who are watching us from heaven and continue to watch over us with prayer. Our thoughts also go to our heavenly Mother, whom we will celebrate tomorrow, 13 May, with the name Our Lady of Fatima. Let us entrust ourselves to her in order to continue our journey with joy and generosity.

Today, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Sunday of the "Good Shepherd", is the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which this year has the theme "The courage to risk for the promise of God". The courage to take a risk for God's promise: following Jesus is always a risk, but it takes courage. In all communities we pray in a particular way for vocations to the priesthood and to consecrated life. This morning, in Saint Peter's Basilica, I had the joy of ordaining 19 new priests. While I warmly greet these neo-presbyters along with their families and friends, I invite you to remember those whom the Lord continues to call by name, as he did one day with the Apostles on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, so they might become "fishers of men". I have invited two of these 19 new priests here to greet you and bless you with me.

I greet you all, families, parish groups and individual faithful from Italy and from different countries. In particular I greet the pilgrims from Texas and those from Valencia; the faithful from Gela and Pistoia; the Confirmation youth from Parma, the Scouts from Cossato and those from Frosinone. And now I will ask these new priests to join me in blessing all of you.

[*Blessing*]

I wish everyone a happy Sunday. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch!
Arrivederci!

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