



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *REGINA CAELI* Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 25 April

2021 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Buongiorno!

On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, called Good Shepherd Sunday, the Gospel (*Jn* 10:11-18) presents Jesus as the true shepherd who *defends*, *knows* and *loves* his sheep.

The “mercenary”, the one who does not care about the sheep because they are not his, is the opposite of the Good Shepherd. He does the job only for pay and is not concerned about defending them: when a wolf arrives, he flees and abandons them (cf vv. 12-13). Instead, Jesus, the true shepherd, *defends* us always and saves us in so many difficult situations, dangerous situations through the light of his word and the strength of his presence that we always experience if we want to listen, every day.

The second aspect is that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, *knows* — the first aspect: *defend*; the second: *he knows* his sheep and the sheep know him (v. 14). How beautiful and comforting it is to know that Jesus knows us one by one, that we are not unknown to him, that our name is known to him! We are not a “mass”, a “multitude” for him, no. We are unique individuals, each with his or her own story, he knows each of us with our own story, each one with his or her own value, both as creatures and as people redeemed by Christ. Each of us can say: Jesus, knows me! It is true, it is like this: He knows us like no other. Only he knows what is in our hearts, our intentions, our most hidden feelings. Jesus knows our strengths and our defects, and is always ready to care for us, to heal the wounds of our errors with the abundance of his mercy. In him, the image the prophets had provided of the shepherd of the people of God is completely fulfilled: Jesus is concerned about his sheep, he gathers them, he binds their wounds, he heals their ailments. We can read this in the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (cf *Ez* 34:11-16).

Therefore, Jesus the Good Shepherd defends, knows, and above all *loves* his sheep. And this is

why he gives his life for them (cf *Jn* 10:15). Love for his sheep, that is, for each one of us, leads him to die on the cross because this is the Father's will — that no one should be lost. Christ's love is not selective; it embraces everyone. He himself reminds us of this in today's Gospel when he says: "And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (*Jn* 10:16). These words testify to his universal concern: He is everyone's shepherd. Jesus wants everyone to be able to receive the Father's love and encounter God.

And the Church is called to carry on this mission of Christ. Aside from those who participate in our communities, there are many people, the majority, who do so only at particular moments or never. But this does not mean they are not God's children: the Father entrusts everyone to Jesus the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for everyone.

Brothers and sisters, Jesus *defends, knows* and *loves* all of us. May Mary Most Holy help us be the first to welcome and follow the Good Shepherd, to joyfully cooperate in his mission.

After the Regina Caeli, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, this past Friday, in Santa Cruz de Quiché in Guatemala, José Maria Gran Cirera and nine martyr companions were beatified: three priests and seven lay people belonging to the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, killed between 1980 and 1991, during a time of persecution of the Catholic Church, committed to defending the poor. Animated by their faith in Christ, they were heroic witnesses of justice and love. May their example make us more generous and courageous in living the Gospel. A round of applause for the new Blesseds. [Applause]

I express my closeness to the people of the Islands of St Vincent and the Grenadines where a volcanic eruption is causing serious harm and difficulties. I assure you of my prayers and I bless all those providing aid and assistance.

I am also close to the victims of the fire in a hospital for Covid patients in Baghdad. As of now, 82 people have died. Let us pray for all of them.

I confess I am very saddened by the tragedy that has once again taken place in the Mediterranean in recent days. One hundred thirty migrants died in the sea. They are people. They are human lives who begged for help in vain for two whole days — help that never arrived. Brothers and sisters, let us all ask ourselves about this umpteenth tragedy. It is a time for shame. Let us pray for these brothers and sisters, and for the many who continue to die in these tragic crossings. Let us also pray for those who can help but prefer to look the other way. Let us pray for them in silence.

Today, the whole Church is celebrating World Day of Prayer for Vocations whose theme is Saint Joseph: the Dream of Vocation. Let us thank the Lord so that he might continue to raise up in the Church people who, for love of Him, consecrate themselves to the proclamation of the Gospel and service to their brothers and sisters. And today in particular, let us offer thanks for the new priests that I ordained earlier in Saint Peter's Basilica — I do not know if they are here — and let us ask the Lord to send good labourers to work in his vineyard and that he might multiply vocations to the consecrated life.

And now I wholeheartedly greet you all of you, people from Rome and pilgrims. In particular, I greet the families and friends of the newly-ordained priests, as well as the community of the Pontifical German-Hungarian College who performed the traditional pilgrimage of the seven Churches today.

I wish you all a happy Sunday. And please do not forget to pray for me. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!