

HOMILY SUNDAY 04 EASTER B
“Servant Leadership - Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:11-18)

A priest announced one Sunday that he was being moved and would be replaced by a new priest. After the celebration he noticed an elderly woman in the front pew weeping. When he asked her what was wrong, she replied it was because a new priest was coming. He hastened to reassure her that the new priest was kind, patient, would get to know people and take time before making any radical changes. She blurted out through her tears, “But that is what they said last time!”

Be a Good Shepherd like Jesus - exercise Servant leadership as he did

Honest, accountable leadership is a pressing issue in our society. Our national government fell from office recently largely because of a corruption. There is so much corruption in many countries, in many communities. Nepotism, in-fighting and divisions continue to sap the energy of many people. Good, honest leadership is a rare commodity in today’s world.

The Gospel today is about leadership, Biblical leadership. Jesus is our model. We also see why he was able to lead so selflessly.

First, he was grounded in an intimate relationship with God the Father through prayer. His knowledge of the Father was biblical knowledge, meaning that he experienced the Father’s love, soaked up his Father’s affirming love in prayer.

Then, Jesus expressed that groundedness through an intimate relationship with his disciples. He knew them, and they knew him, knew his voice. In Palestine, all the sheep are sheltered for the night in a common sheepfold and in the morning the shepherds called out their sheep who recognized their voice and would only respond to the voice of their shepherd.

In the end, the relationship that Jesus enjoyed and experienced with the Father, that deep grounding in the Father’s unconditional love and blessing, empowered him to give his life away for others by teaching, healing, and ultimately, dying on the cross.

Jesus was able to freely choose to die for us – no one forced him. His was a free gift of love. A sense of that is found in the story of a French soldier who was told by a doctor, as he came out of a coma, that he had lost his arm in the battle. The soldier replied that he did not lose his arm, he “gave” it for France.

If we are to lead as Jesus did, then we must be like him in the same three ways. First, we must be grounded in an intimate relationship with Jesus, soaking up his values and attributes in prayer.

Then, we must strive to develop positive relationships with others through mutual dialogue, forgiveness, understanding and communication.

Flowing from this will be lives of selfless service and ministry, seeking always to care for others and to share of our selves.

Some of the Good Shepherds around us are people like Harry Lafond who was elected for 5 terms as chief of Muskeg Lake First Nations, without ever an appeal. His first act as a new chief was to send the band administration for training.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta was a great example of caring leadership, grounded in intimate prayer, fed by the Eucharist, and lived out by picking up dying people off the street and giving them a death with dignity and love.

Another is Jean Vanier, who founded L'Arche, a home for the mentally challenged, and who teaches this wisdom: If we want to give to the poor, let them give something to you, and that will give them dignity, for the poor are always being given to. Allow them the dignity of giving you something, perhaps even only a cigarette, or a story, or a smile, and you will have given them great gift of dignity. Now that is servant leadership.

The Eucharist we celebrate today is an intimate relationship with the Father through the Son, and a deep experience of fellowship with others; leading us to a commitment to live the Eucharist through service, to be servant leaders.

So, be a Good Shepherd, like Jesus: exercise Servant leadership as he did.