

## **HOMILY 4TH SUN EASTER May 3, 2020**

How many of you think life is fair? This idea that if we do all the right things and we follow all of the rules only good things will happen to us. This idea that we get what we deserve. The truth is life is unfair. Most of us learn during our childhood, that life does not work that way. Life is not fair. Sometimes we do all of the right things and life does not work out the way we would like. That is a fact. And sometimes we are disappointed in God, particularly when we do all of the right things, follow all of the rules, and bad things happen to us anyway. Bad things happen to us. That is part of life, but we cannot confuse life with God. Life is unfair, God is not. We must separate the physical reality of our lives from the spiritual reality, our relationship with God. God will always be with us, loving us unconditionally, walking with us, and caring for us. Much of what happens in our life is out of our control. When life is unfair, when bad things happen to us, we need to make a choice. We can become a victim or we can become a student. A victim begs God to remove all of the problems from his or her life so that he or she might be happy. A student does not care why it happened, that is outside of his or her control. A student asks what is God teaching me through this difficulty.

In the Gospel reading we hear that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He calls us by name, he leads us and he walks with us. This is the voice we want to follow. There are other voices. These voices can cause fear and panic. These are the voices we want to ignore. Jesus is the gate through which we enter the sheepfold. The sheep recognize the shepherd's voice and follow him. Do you recognize the voice of Jesus in your life? Do you follow him?

There is nothing fair about this pandemic. During this time of pandemic there are a lot of voices out there. The voice of the Good Shepherd is calling us into one sheepfold where we can love and support one another and help one another. We need to work together to stop the spread of this virus. We need to listen to that voice. That is how Jesus is going to lead us through this pandemic. There are other voices out there, voices that are not so helpful and we should not listen to them. These are the voices that are calling us to see ourselves as victims. These voices are placing blame. We have

to find someone to blame and then make them pay. There are voices out there that just want to criticize everyone. I am suffering here because someone else is doing a bad job. I firmly believe that the vast majority of people out there are doing the best they can during a very difficult time. My guess is that being critical or filing law suits are not going to see us through this pandemic. I think it just makes things worse. It just creates more fear and anxiety.

I think it is much better to approach this as a student. What is God trying to teach me through this? Do you think God is going to use this time out to teach us something? Maybe it is an opportunity to look at the negative things in our lives and make some changes. Maybe it is an opportunity to restore some balance, to reset the direction our lives are taking. Did you know that 43% of the things you do each day are done by habit? If you do the same thing over and over again you do not even think about them, you just do them. When they are good habits, when we behave in a positive way, habit is a very good thing. When they are bad habits, we repeatedly act in a negative way without even thinking about it. Maybe this is the time to break some bad habits and form new healthy habits.

As a result of this pandemic we are facing our own mortality. Maybe this is a time to come to terms with our own mortality. We do not like to think about it, but none of us are going to live forever. I have heard people say: "He ate right, he exercised, he maintained a healthy weight and took care of himself and he died anyway. How unfair is that!" Well he probably felt great and was able to live life to the fullest while he was here, but we cannot beat death. Maybe this is a good time to get things in order because we never know what day will be our last. We cannot control when or how we die, but we can have a good death. A good death involves being fulfilled by how we lived our lives, being at peace with the people in our lives and being right with God. So be a student, not a victim. Ask God what he will be teaching you during this time of pandemic. He is the Good Shepherd. Listen for his voice. He will lead you.