

HOMILY 4th SUN EASTER YRB 2018

I know many of you are still thinking about the shootings that took place in Parkland Florida on Ash Wednesday this year. I was reading about Aaron Feis, who worked at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School as a security guard and an assistant football coach. He was one of the 17 people killed in the shooting. He died shielding students from gunfire. He gave up his life for his students. He had a long history of loving and self sacrificing for his students. Aaron graduated from high school there and was dedicated to the students. He spent countless hours making DVDs to highlight different football players. And he did not just make DVDs for the star players. It was easy to promote the stars. He got to know the college recruiters, and appealed to them to use their connections to get them into college. Even if he does not have a place at your school, please try and find a place for him. It is estimated that he helped 50 to 70 kids get into college that otherwise would have fallen through the cracks. And this is just one example of how he helped his students and the people in his community.

Today in the Gospel, Jesus tells us that he is the good shepherd, and a good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The Good Shepherd was a good image 2,000 years ago. The people were very familiar of how challenging being a shepherd was. Sheep are not the warm lovable animals that we may think they are. And they are not bright at all. Sheep would probably die if they do not have a shepherd take care of them. They wander off and are vulnerable to all kinds of predators. They would walk off cliffs if someone was not there to protect them. But the Good Shepherd would lay down his life for these dumb, unlovable animals. I think Aaron Feis, the Good Security Guard and Coach is probably a better image for us to understand. Aaron laid down his life for his students, and went way out of his way to love, protect and serve them.

We are called to follow the example that Jesus gives us as the Good Shepherd, or the Good Security Guard and Coach. We are called to love, protect and serve the people that are entrusted to our care, the people that God brings into our lives to help. How do we do that? We heard in the first reading that Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders which has become the cornerstone. Jesus must be the cornerstone of our lives. We can try to set him aside, try to replace him with something else, but he is the only cornerstone that will provide us with a firm foundation.

When I say that Jesus must be the cornerstone, I mean that he must be the driving force of our lives. I think sometimes we get off track. What is the most important thing in your life, what is the driving force? Sometimes it can become money, possessions, fame, recognition, power, success, alcohol, drugs, sex. When we lose our focus, we can easily become side tracked. Our focus shifts from day to day, time to time, but we cannot lose track of Jesus in the process. Other things may seem important at the time, but it is only Jesus that provides a firm foundation. I think Aaron lived his life with Jesus as the cornerstone. He knew that he was called to love, protect and serve his students and all of the people around him. He had a positive effect on so many and he laid down his life for his students. His was a life well led. Most of us will not be called to literally lay down our lives, but we are frequently called to put the needs of others ahead of our own. We can do that if we keep Jesus at the center.