

HOMILY 4th SUN EASTER YRC 2019

I grew up in a very protective environment. My neighborhood was working middle class, white, Catholic. I went through 12 years of Catholic School. I lived half a block from church and school and went to church and school with everyone else in the neighborhood. Not much diversity there. When I got into my teenage years I started to think that there is a whole world out there that I was not experiencing and maybe I should be experiencing some of these things. When I was 15 I got a job at a movie theatre and had some friends with more diverse backgrounds. There was one guy in particular that seemed to have a lot of freedom. His parents put no boundaries on him. He could go and come as he pleased. At 15 he could hang out at his house and drink and smoke and smoke pot. His parents did not care, they did it too. I thought this seemed pretty exciting and I went to his house a few times. The reality was that the house was a filthy mess. Mom was not cooking dinner at dinner time. I saw his interactions with his family and there did not seem to be much love or caring there. It was at that time that my Father died. A big part of my security was gone. Sometimes we do not truly appreciate what we have until it is gone. I gained a whole new appreciation for both my parents. I never doubted that they loved me unconditionally and would do anything for me. What I used to see as their attempts to restrict my freedom really gave me the freedom to grow up in a healthy nurturing environment. I had a new appreciation for my mother who devoted her life to raising her 4 children. While our lives were not perfect, I never went through those rebellious years. I understood that what my mother did she did out of love.

Jesus tells us today in the Gospel reading: “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me.” I think we sometimes look down on sheep as being too stupid to think for themselves and just blindly follow the shepherd. The truth is that sheep have to be protected

from the snow and the rain, disease and predators and they need a good shepherd to protect them. They benefit greatly from being part of a flock. They gain safety, guidance, nourishment and care. There are many things in our environment that we need to be protected from as well, imperfect relationships, emotional crises, crime, and half truths. We encounter grace and sin, love and hate. We can try to navigate our way through all of it on our own, but we benefit greatly from being part of a flock. Jesus loves us with profound intimacy. I can begin to comprehend how Jesus loves each one of us because I experienced that unconditional love from my parents. We need to hear Jesus voice and follow him. He will not lead us down the wrong path. And following Jesus and living as part of a Catholic community does not restrict our freedom. It gives us the freedom to grow and flourish in a healthy environment. Our children have so many negative influences in their environment. Being part of a Catholic community gives them the freedom to grow and flourish in a healthy, nurturing environment. While our Parish family here at St. Edith is not perfect, I would way rather live my life within this community than try to figure it out on my own. I am really thankful that I had the loving parents that I had and that I grew up as part of a Catholic Community. It gave me a firm foundation in my life. And I am really thankful that I am part of our Catholic Community here at St. Edith.