



June 2024 Diocesan Update



By way of DCS

Pictures left to right: 1.) Institution of Fr. Aaron Rowley, All Saints, Raleigh, North Carolina. 2.) Confirmations, Christ the Redeemer, Owensboro, Kentucky. 3.) Confirmations, Church of the Holy Cross, Moseley, Virginia. 4.) Institution of Fr. Mike Lewis and the Ohio Valley Clericus, Christ Our Hope, Fairborn, Ohio.

Sermon excerpt: Institution of Fr. Aaron Rowley, All Saints Raleigh, June 8, 2024

Our Gospel lesson fittingly comes from Chapter 10 of St. John's Gospel and provides his account of the time Jesus described Himself and His ministry with these words: "I am the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus' self-description would certainly have awakened many images within the minds and memories of his audience at the time. The people Jesus was addressing certainly knew what shepherding was all about: the work, the care, the sacrifice, the devotion, the love. Jesus' Jewish audience would have been especially familiar with Holy Scripture's comparison of Yahweh's promised Messiah/King to a shepherd caring for His sheep.

Jesus seized upon that familiar image to describe the key quality His Jewish listeners should expect their Messiah to display: *I am the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep.* The difference between the person who is a true shepherd to the sheep under his care and the one who is only interested in the flock as far as his own needs and agenda are concerned is especially evident when the going gets tough, as it inevitably will, and when the predator appears. For when the going gets tough and the predator appears, the false shepherd, the hireling runs away. The sheep aren't his sheep, his efforts at protecting them are feeble at best, and his self-centered commitment to the flock is exposed. When life's difficulties press in, and when the menacing predator stalks... provoking a fearful, dangerous and even life-threatening situation for the sheep...the hireling runs away.

But, Jesus explained, the true shepherd...the Good Shepherd *lays down his life for his sheep.* It is a most poignant, prophetic, and revealing picture and explanation of Jesus' future and role. Unlike the hireling, when difficulties arise, and the predator appears, the Good Shepherd stands His ground, gathers the sheep, and resists the attack. As a result the sheep are protected and guided on; and the predators, not the shepherd, run away! The Good Shepherd's intense commitment to the safety and well-being of his sheep is certain and assured. Think of Jesus facing the devil in the wilderness...think of Jesus enduring the threats, lies, doubts and dangers during His years of ministry...and especially recall Jesus' final days and hours including His cruel and violent death. Think of all that, and you are thinking about the Good Shepherd laying down His life for His sheep.

I have always been struck by Jesus' rhetorical question to the disciples, also recorded by St. John, when Jesus forewarned His disciples of His upcoming death. Jesus groaned, "Now my soul has become troubled." (Stop here a minute: has your soul ever become troubled?...those soul-troubling times when you have to sort through your emotions...weigh your options...and try to make sense of it all? A troubled soul is part of the Christian life with its perplexing times and tests of faith: perfectly normal and even necessary, the Scriptures say.)

In these verses, St. John was quoting Jesus as He was facing such soul-troubling times: the Son of God, fully human and sorting through the emotions stirring and troubling His soul. “Now my soul has become troubled, and what shall I say, ‘Father save me from this hour?’” (*What shall I say, Father I’ve decided to come back home to you? Please send a legion of angels to destroy all those trying to destroy me...And by the way... disciples/sheep...you will have to fend for yourselves from here on in!*)...Is that what the Good Shepherd would say as the deepest difficulties, challenges and demands of His calling and ministry were troubling His soul? “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Thy Name.”

THIS is the Good Shepherd talking...the Good Shepherd, troubled soul and all, talking to His Father about taking care of the sheep entrusted to His care...talking about laying down His life for His sheep. Such selflessness, sacrifice, and willingness to die for His sheep sets the Good Shepherd apart from all the rest. And it is this quality, as much as any other, that has moved millions of people over the last 2,000+ years to give their lives to Jesus the Messiah, Jesus the Savior, Jesus the Good Shepherd.

One more thing: To personalize and minister His care for each of His sheep even further, Jesus has prepared, empowered and called some as under-shepherds...hands-on human channels of the loyalty, kindness, devotion, love and care that Jesus has for His sheep. I can honestly say that the clergymen I have become familiar with through my years in the REC and DCS understand their calling and charge in a similar way. Fr. Aaron, Kelsey and children, I’m thankful and pleased that you have accepted this call and warmly welcome you into our diocese and this new season of ministry and service to Christ’s Church. We are delighted to have you!

I must also say how thankful I am for Fr. Ian and Cam and their devotion to our Lord, our diocese and, of course, All Saints parish. In typically humble Fr. MacGregor fashion, when I attempted to acknowledge the accolades and love people were bestowing upon him for his labors at All Saints, Fr. Ian seemed somewhat surprised...responding, “Frankly, I never thought I did much more than make sure the doors were open every Sunday.” Well...we’ll take more clergy who *keep the doors open* like Fr. Ian any day; and the good Gospel work continues at All Saints, Raleigh!

+ Peter



Ordination of Deacon David Heng, Trinity Anglican, Evansville, Indiana.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).



Confirmations, St. James Anglican, Memphis, Tennessee.