

Homily Notes / Speaking Points

These points may be helpful for priests and deacons who are preparing a homily for the Fourth Sunday of Easter; or for speakers who may be giving a talk for the occasion or for vocations promotion in general.

The image of the Good Shepherd is one of the earliest Christian images. The early Christians had a special affection for this image. It is seen on many well known ancient buildings, in the catacombs, mosaics and sculptures.

Offer some reflections about the ministry of priesthood with parallels from the work of the shepherd.

Personal testimony is a very powerful way of engaging with a congregation. When was the last time that you told your people about your vocation story? Why is the priesthood so special to you? What are the most fulfilling moments of ministry for you? Share with the congregation your joy of ministry and story of vocation.

Ask people to pray for vocations. In his Letter for this day, Pope Francis says, *'There can be no promotion of vocations or Christian mission apart from constant contemplative prayer. The Christian life needs to be nourished by attentive listening to God's word, and above all, by the cultivation of a personal relationship with the Lord in Eucharistic Adoration, the privileged "place" for our encounter with God'.*

It is easy to become discouraged by what seems to be the wayward nature and actions of so many people today. Humanity, and especially the young, need good example and guidance. They need 'Good Shepherds' in their midst to encourage, give example and gently guide them in the right ways. The Church and world need priests.

Pope Francis gives our world an example of the 'Good Shepherd' who goes out to all and shows love by his actions. Talk about some of the ways that the Holy Father models the ministry of priesthood to the world by his actions and his words.

'The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want'. Today many people search for the latest, or think the things of this world will provide happiness. When we seek Christ the Good Shepherd, He answers all our needs. The ministry of the priest helps us to find Christ in the Sacraments of the Church, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation.