

FR. PETER'S HOMILY  
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

"Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there."

I couldn't get that familiar jingle out of my head as I read today's Gospel.

"Like a good shepherd, Jesus is there."

See what I mean?

Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah declaring that God will appoint good and just shepherds for his flock.

Indeed, God becomes our shepherd in and through Jesus.

Jesus is also the fulfillment of the words spoken in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

It is said that Psalm 23 is the all-time favorite passage from the Bible.

It is both comforting and challenging at the same time.

The Psalm is especially beloved in the King James Bible translation.

Just listen to the 4th verse: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

The Psalm is striking in how it presents the all-powerful Lord of the universe coming down to our level and caring for us as a good shepherd cares for his sheep.

No wonder this Psalm is used so often as the Responsorial at funerals.

In the popular version of the Psalm, "Shepherd Me O God," we pray: "Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life."

As we heard in last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus shares his ministry of shepherding with his apostles and their successors.

This week we see the apostles returning to Jesus full of the stories of what they had done and taught.

Jesus wants to take them away for a little "R and R," but his compassion for the persistent crowds moves his heart to pity for them, "for they were like sheep without a shepherd."

Again, "Like a good shepherd, Jesus is there."

Please pray for the men Jesus has chosen as shepherds for us today: Pope Francis, Bishop McClory, myself, Deacon Gary and all of our brother priests and deacons.

We are only human and, as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, being chosen as a shepherd does not mean we are without our faults.

All of us find our hope in the renewing power of the Eucharist as we hear again in Psalm 23: "You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

"Like a good shepherd, Jesus is here."

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is certainly present at the historic Eucharistic Congress taking place in Indianapolis.

Tens of thousands of Catholics have converged on Indiana to celebrate the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Jesus not only feeds us in Holy Communion, but he comes to dwell within us.

In this Sacrament he is as close to us as he can be this side of heaven.

There is a beautiful contemporary Christian song that describes this reality as a miracle of love.

It is because he loves us that Jesus has given us the Holy Eucharist.

“Like a good shepherd, Jesus is here.”