

Ordination Homily for Maria Annoni and Rose Henzler, May 7, 2017

Wow! What a profound ending to this gospel passage. “I came that you may have life and have it to the full.” I have come for **you, you, you and me**, to have life. In this passage, Jesus is gracing us with the vision, his vision and gift to us.

The gospel of the blind person is immediately preceding today’s gospel. Blindness or sight in John’s gospel is not the physical ability to see but rather a spiritual orientation. It is possessing an openness to God’s gift of revelation in Jesus. This discourse on the Shepherd and the sheep gate is providing an attempt to enlighten those who are continuing to live in blindness and darkness. In Jesus’ day, it was the religious scholars and leaders.

What about us today? Who is the one living in night and gloom? There are many folks living there, I suspect! Do we hear and respond to this metaphor and words of Jesus? In this passage, there is the true shepherd and then the thief and robber. The thief and robber can uncenter us. There is a cacophony of noise in our life: bells, buzzers, beeps, news and fake news. The sheep knows the voice of the shepherd because they have spent much time together. There is an authentic relationship. Those who were blind, and yet listening to Jesus, just did not get it. What about us?

The pastoral setting of Ps. 23 paints a picture of delightful green meadows and water streams that are still and alive with life. Amid that bucolic setting is the true shepherd that provides safety, guidance and abundant life. Our responsorial psalm reflects our desire: “You are all I want, you are all I need, you alone are my delight, you will lead me through the darkness of night, in you my heart shall rest.” Jesus says of himself “I am the sheep gate; whoever enters through me will be safe.”

This afternoon two women who have been preparing for priesthood for most of their lives will receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. They choose the readings of the day because it reflects who they are. Maria and Rose have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd calling them by name to bring God’s nourishing love and compassion. The past two years they have focused on their prayer, study, reflection, CPE and practicums. Jean Vanier writes concerning becoming a shepherd: “To become a good shepherd is to come out of the shell of selfishness to be attentive to those for whom we are responsible to reveal to them their fundamental beauty and value and help them grow and become fully alive.” Maria and Rose will serve their respective communities with love, pastoral presence and the sacraments, especially the celebration of Eucharistic.

Maria Annoni brings years of teaching, pastoral music ministry and liturgical formation. Maria is thoroughly formed in the VVII documents, liturgy and pastoral care. Her Benedictine spirituality is her foundation. Maria is a frequent homeliest at the Episcopal parish where she serves as music minister. She will serve as pastor and priest with the ***Spirit of Christ, the Healer*** inclusive community which has provided her encouragement, support and prayer.

After becoming a widow Rosemarie Henzler finished her degree in English and Theology at St. Catherine College. She then became the caregiver of her new husband who developed Alzheimer's. Rose ministers with the sick and dying in her neighborhood. She will be a member of the priest rotation is on the leadership circle of Mary Magdalene First Apostle where she will provide pastoral care.

There is a new book by Bradford E. Hinze titled: ***Prophetic Obedience***. The author offers a new vision. Prophetic obedience is the fundamental marker of a dialogical church. It welcomes the wisdom of all the faithful-us. That is in line with the vision statement of RCWP. "We respond to God's call to priesthood in prophetic obedience" our document states. Our God has always responded to the laments of all creation, to the pain and suffering of all peoples. The people of God today are lamenting and crying for pastoral care, inclusive Eucharist and the rightful place of women in the Church. We, the priests, deacons and candidates of RCWP are responding in prophetic obedience to the call of the Shepherd. Peter writes in the second reading: "Beloved, if you put up with suffering for doing what is right, this is acceptable in God's eyes. It was for this you were called, my sisters." The journey as a Roman Catholic Womanpriest is not always stress-free and tranquil, yet it is filled with our God's love, care, compassion and challenges.

May each of us embrace the call and challenge of the Shepherd to walk through the gate which is opened to us. Let us remember: God loves us, each of us, as we are. God loves us enough not to leave us there! "I have come that you have life and have it to the full". Maria and Rose, may you find the full life offered to you in shepherding God's people and being priest to all those given to you to serve and pastor.