

Someone sent me some religious quotes. My favorite was, "If you want a better pastor for your parish, pray for him." Yes, please pray for me that I might become a better priest for you.

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. It has a special meaning for me, because on Good Shepherd Sunday, I approached my pastor about becoming a priest.

Yes, Jesus called himself a shepherd: the People of God are not to be driven by fear but led freely by love.

Shepherds were humble folk. If Jesus had been born in the inn at Bethlehem rather than in the stable, the shepherds would not have been allowed in to visit him; this was the first signal of his accessibility: for all of God's people.

The good shepherd, Jesus said, "lays down his life for his sheep." Who were the *bad shepherds, then? Not the literal shepherds, the simple men on the hillside looking after their sheep.

In the Old Testament the term was applied to all who have any kind of authority (elders, kings). In nearly all Scriptural passages such 'shepherds' were being faulted for neglecting their responsibilities to the 'flock', fattening themselves instead of tending to the needs of the flock. Notice, I am thin.

Similar, in contrast to the religious authorities of his day, Jesus calls himself the good shepherd.

On every page of the gospel we find him seeking out these marginalized people: public sinners, lepers, Samaritans, the sick, the tormented and the like.

Jesus, as Shepherd, stood up to the authorities for his flock, he defied the systems that made them outcasts, he laid down his life rather than turn his back on them and kowtow to the authorities.

The Shepherds lived with the herds out in the pastures. The vocation as a priest is not a clocked job, but one in which he lives within his flock, wherever that may take him, be it a dinner or to anoint someone.

Yes, all aspects of life. The one's I have baptized now act as servers; those I gave 1st communion are now going into college.

The words 'pastor' and 'pastoral' come from the Latin for shepherd. A bishop's crozier is a really a sort of stylish shepherd's stick.

Those ancient shepherds carried a stick not to beat and prod their sheep but to beat off any wild animals that threatened the flock.

Even today, our bishop and his priests are expected to die if necessary in your defense. We have countless centuries of Shepherds/martyrs doing so.

In fact, all Christians are challenged to lay down their lives if necessary for others.

The parents of these little ones are also shepherds. You are to protect them, teach them and love them. Most importantly, be shepherds of their faith. Give them that so that one day they may realize the love of the Good Shepherd.

(Brief, as we had a large number of baptisms at each Mass.)