

## **HOMILY by Fr. Anthony Davis**

**“Don’t let go. Whatever happens, don’t let go.”**

May 12, 2019

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (Year C)

Acts 13:14, 43-52; Rv. 7:9, 14b-17; Jn 10:27-30

**As Good Shepherds, "Whatever happens, don't let go."** There is a wonderful scene towards the end of the movie, Titanic. As the ship is preparing to take its final plunge into the cold waters of the Atlantic, Jack Dawson and Rose are hanging straight onto the edge of the ship. **Jack turns to Rose and tells her: "Don't let go. Whatever happens, don't let go."** There is something profound in knowing that there is someone who wants us to hold on -- no matter how difficult the situation. As children, we hold on to our parents for guidance and protection. When we are adults, we hope to find a spouse or close friend who will hold us when we are hurt and carry us when we stumble.

In today's Gospel, as we celebrate the Good Shepherd Sunday, we reflect on the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who devotedly and kindly takes care of his flock. And so, we hear the profound revelation from Jesus that God intends to "hold us" through every storm and every difficulty of life. Jesus, as our Good Shepherd, offers us double protection. He assures us that we are in his hands and nothing will ever take us from him. He further assures us that we are also in the Father's hands. Nothing can ultimately hurt us. Thus today's Resp. Psalm assures us: "We are His people, the flock he shepherds..."

**Life Message: Let us become good shepherds:** Everyone who is entrusted with the care of others is a shepherd. Hence, pastors, parents, teachers, doctors, nurses, government officials, etc. are all shepherds.

As we celebrate Mothers' Day, permit me to zero in a bit on the special role of our dear mothers. Their influence on their children is so great that it affects the children throughout their lives. Our mothers not only gave us birth but nursed us, nurtured us, trained us in their religious beliefs and practices, taught us good manners and ideal behavior, disciplined us as best as they could and made us good citizens of our country, our Church and our society.

Hence, we become good shepherds by loving those entrusted to us, praying for them, spending our time and talents for their welfare, and guarding them from

physical and spiritual dangers. Parents must be especially careful of their duties, thus giving their children good example through the way they live their Christian lives. And so parents and guardians, in the line of duty, **"Whatever happens, don't let go."** Let's do all this in imitation of Christ, who says: **"I am the good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep...My sheep know me; I call each of them by name and they and they hear my voice..."** (Jn.10:11ff).

By this I mean that, Christ's love was a selfless, fearless, and an others-serving love. In other words, Christ's love was as confrontational at times, as it was meek at times, depending on the circumstances at hand.

Therefore, I pray that as shepherds, we would also bring a strong love, a challenging, prophetic, and reforming love to bear in raising our families, amid negative peer pressure, and in the face of neighborhood disvalues; that we would bring such a love to bear when conversing with our lax friends, in our involvement in civic affairs, when confronting social evils, and when contesting for social values.

This is what I call "Love with a backbone!!!" i.e. "A prophetic and a contesting and a tough love, not a meek love, which is called for in many instances, in the living of a true Christian Life".

**Conclusion:** It is fitting that we who are the Shepherd's flock should do our best to love as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, loved. Most often our love will be the love that is as gentle as a mother's love, but sometimes it must also be love in the image of the biblical "refiner with the flaming fire, the fire that burns, though burning only to separate the dross from the gold" (Mal.3:2-3). In times like these: "Don't let go. Whatever happens, don't let go."