



Shepherds for Christ

Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles

Acts 12:1-11
2 Tim 4:6-8, 17-18
Matt 16:13-19

Matthew 16:13-19 describes the holy quality of "shepherding" that's required of those who are in Christian leadership. This includes not only our priests, but also lay ministers, parents, teachers, and so forth.

After Peter recognized Jesus as the Messiah, he was called and commissioned to shepherd others into the same realization.

Today, every follower of Christ is called to evangelize. It's our primary mission as we follow Jesus and continue the work he began.

The responsibility is especially great when one is also called to any role of leadership. We are to show those in our care what Jesus is really like. Not only are we examples to those we lead, but when we are in charge of meetings, or directing clubs or choirs or religious education classes, or having positions of authority in parish or diocesan ministries, we have been given vehicles for the mission.

Paul suffered in his shepherd's ministry (as we see in the first reading), like Jesus did and like we do if we're involved enough to really make a difference for the kingdom of God.

The good news is that the strongholds of evil ("the gates of the netherworld") cannot prevail against our

efforts to help people escape from the destruction of sin. In Christ's Holy Spirit, we have the power and guidance to succeed. Christ goes ahead of us and his Spirit prepares the hearts of those whom we are called to reach.

The "gates" are the escape route from Satan's prison. Those who are enslaved to sinful lifestyles and the devil's deceptions need our help. We cannot drag them to Christ, but we can throw open the gates and show them the way out.

Who's missing from your pasture? A Christian leader who does not go into Satan's territory to rescue lost souls and who does nothing to protect his flock from wandering into danger is forgetting that this was Christ's entire mission, and through us it still is.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. List the people who are in your care. Do they see Jesus in you? Do they learn about Jesus from the way you treat them?
2. What can you do to improve your shepherding?
3. Describe a time when someone shepherded you closer to Jesus.
4. When you shepherd others, do they always know it's really Jesus who's leading them?
5. When they fail to recognize Jesus in you despite your best efforts, how do you handle this?

