

I ask you to come with me in your imagination to a calm suburb in Detroit, a suburb known as Waterford Township. If you turn down Paulsen Street with me, a street that's attractive surrounded by birch and elm trees - it seemed like any other quiet piece of America. And yet the people in Waterford Township some years ago used to call it the Street of Death.

It was a place where a white van would pull up in front of a brown two-story house on Paulsen Street. A slender white-haired man with glasses emerged from the van and walked up to the door. Each time he made his visit, someone in that house died. The man was Dr. Jack Kevorkian, who assisted in over 20 suicides and became known as Doctor Death.

Now, go back with me two thousand years to a calm suburb in ancient Palestine. I ask you to watch a man as he takes children into his arms, as he reaches out to the sick, the dying, the rejected. Watch as he is dying, he comforts the thief dying next to him.

He continues to give life, to the very end. The words he speaks in today's gospel: "*I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.*" His call, his path, is that of life, abundant life. And so, Jesus calls out to give us true life. He leads us & feeds us through this life with hopes of the Kingdom of God as our final destination. He leads us to love and love is what gives the human species life.

*Show me a person filled with hate and I will show a person who has not fed on love.

Each evening, the shepherd would lead his flock into a **protected area**. On Sundays, he leads us here - Remember, numbers mean safety from predators! Here he provides us with the safety of his presence.

As each would pass through the gate, the Shepherd would **check them for injuries**. It continues here, as he looks over us in confession or he simply leads us here to rest and heal from whatever happened this past week.

Some of sheep don't always make it back and wander on certain Sundays. They seek to fill this hunger for Love with other things, but it is never enough.

*I remember reading an article about deer in certain parks being fed by campers. Some had so great a fondness for chips, so much so that they stopped eating grass and began to die of starvation. That's us, without Christ's love, without a relationship with him.

To find true food, to find love and life, we have to be able to **discern his voice** for direction. Shepherds in Jesus' day spent years with their sheep because they kept them for their wool, not to slaughter them. Spending time with him, they knew his voice above any other voice. Spending time with Jesus in prayer or listening to God's words in here will mean we will always hear him out there.

The sheep also knew his voice, because **he named** them, he called them by name. To name something is to give it value. The point is that Jesus loves us enough to call us by name, every day of our life, in the midst of our busy world.

You see, not to name something means it is easy to let it go. If one is simply overseeing sheep for slaughter, he is not going to call them by name: “*Come here Sparky, buddy old pal.*” It would be pretty tough to put Sparky on the grill that evening for dinner.

In the concentration camps they had no names; they were called only by numbers branded to them. No, Jesus calls us by name because of love. Remember Mary Magdalene standing in the dark of that empty tomb on Easter morning? He simply said, “*Mary*” and she knew immediately it was the Shepherd, for she knew his voice and he her name.

Another interesting fact is that the shepherd **named his sheep by description**: For example, he might call out to them: “*Come here, Brown Leg or Black Ear.*”

I wonder what name might he give to us that would describe us? Ah, where are you **Gloom and Doom**? Yes, I hear you, “*This ain’t gonna work. We gotta problem here.*” Next to him is **Cynic**, “*They just want us for our money. They just want to fleece us.*” But then there is another and he calls, *Come here Zest For Life!* Next to her is **Charity**, who always seeks to help. *Oh, I see Sleepy is nodding off just when the first reading begins. He always does that. And look we have Smiley the Usher who always puts a smile on everyone’s faces. There’s Beautiful Voice, hanging out with her lector sheep. Hey, isn’t that Caffeine Carlin over there? There’s No Esteem, I have to feed him more. But Vanity, you need to be sheered a bit.* Yes, Jesus has names for all of us.

Sometimes, though, he **changes our names** when we begin to change, like was the case when **Saul** became **St. Paul** and **Simon** became **Peter**, the **Rock**.

In leading his sheep to green pastures, there comes a time upon which the Shepherd has to lead the sheep through **narrow places**, which can be a bit painful and rocky. Perhaps it might simply be Truth that we do not want to hear or a dry, spiritual time so that we might not take His nourishment for granted.

We are in one of those narrow places with the Cathedral – Sacrifices will be needed before we reach that place called completion.

Normally, one might stockpile food before leaving for long journey. The ideal way of doing repairs might have been to have a number of years for campaign fundraising and then begin the work. However, we had no choice (*major leakage, several glass window were in grave danger of falling, etc.*) and had to proceed.

The exterior is just about completed and eventually we will make our way to the interior. Now we’ve all seen the financial updates in the bulletin and the **red chart** marking our progress. Our goal for the Cathedral parish – **just us** – is 1.5 million by June 30 and we have a balance of \$300,000 to go. Hopefully **every household** will hear *the call* and join us in the journey. We do have other pledges, outside the parish, which will bring us 2.2 million.

Before we get too comfortable with our **red chart** in the bulletin, a lot of this cash is not in hand, but will arrive in the years ahead.

Hence, we do have some **cash flow challenges**: To date, more than \$3.7 million has been expended, covered in part by Campaign cash received and with the loan that the Bishop has provided has covered the bills for now. Obviously with such a loan, we have to keep up with very steep interest payments.

On top of all this, we have to maintain our **operating budget of expenses**, which has increased for a number of reasons – I promise we will dedicate a weekend for you to see just what it takes to maintain the Cathedral flock.

Again, I want to thank all of you who have made sacrifices and will continue to make sacrifices for both the **Campaign** and for our **operating expenses**.

Now, you know I have rarely spoken of money – so you can't go home saying, "*He just talks about money!*" (: I only spoke of this today because I'm fearful we may become too comfortable with our chart and rest on our laurels, which is ironically the name of the street that runs in front of the Cathedral, not on Her behind).

I turn, now, once again to the Shepherd image that Jesus' spoke of. Listen to what Jesus said: "*Whoever enters the gate is the shepherd to the sheep.*" His disciples, who once scattered as sheep, returned as shepherds. We need each other to be examples for each other.

You see, when the Shepherd came to a running stream, the sheep sometimes would not follow. So what he would do is pick up one the sheep, perhaps a kid of a mother and would carry it across. The mother, seeing the kid on the other side would then follow; and then the rest, seeing her example, would follow.

There are many of you who have carried us (spiritually/financially) through the years. And I just want thank you for being examples for all of us to follow.