

Pastor's Message

March- April 2010

By Rev. Dr. Anthony T. Padovano

SUFFERING AND THE GOOD SHEPHERD

We fear suffering, perhaps, more than death. Indeed, the one in pain and those who love that person often find death a relief.

When we suffer, we feel isolated and helpless, bewildered and frightened. Those who show compassion and offer consolation bring us the salvation of caring and love. They enable us to overcome alienation and to find connection and community. The sound of their voice, the sight of their face, the sense of their presence makes us peaceful.

Few images in life are more moving than that of the mother who takes a hurting child in her arms and helps that child to feel safe and to fall asleep.

The Christian community is most itself and most like Christ when it comforts its grieving members, when it takes away the terror and the trauma with deep, deep healing.

On the cross, Jesus has nowhere to turn. He is isolated and forsaken. Something in his heart convinced him that God was trustworthy, even in this, and that God wanted none of this. Jesus made an act of faith in a compassionate God, one whom he believed would be heart-broken by the agony of the innocent Jesus. Jesus gave his spirit into God's keeping when his own body could hold that spirit no more.

Not long before the cross, Jesus spoke of a good shepherd who would not let a single sheep be lost, a shepherd that would suffer rather than leave a sheep abandoned, forsaken, terrified.

The joy of Easter is the celebration of the good shepherd himself who found, in his own hour of desolation, that God would shepherd us, would shepherd him, so that no sheep and no shepherd would ever be lost.

Anthony