

St Pius & St Anthony Homily 4th Sunday Easter Year C

Well, our county has been cautioned: Have you all heard the news? If you are utilizing the walking trails around Mike Miller Park on these beautiful days, the Marshall Co Parks Department cautions us, there are **attacking hawks** along the walkway. So, beware. A few people have had them dive and strike them on the back of their heads or shoulders. What is going on with that? Well, the hawks are nesting, egging, birthing or all of the above, and we know how often with examples in nature that you do not get between a protective mother and her young ones in the wild. But here is an added detail; Since Hawks are a federally protected bird, the county can't clear the trees of them. So, they advise if you are on the path, wear a helmet or at least eye protection! Apparently the 'protective status' of Hawks comes from them, being such good predators for thinning out small game populations. I had a little experience of that, behind St Pius church recently. I saw a hawk, perched on the ground squawking a little. Unusual! So I figured, 'Oh I bet he's got a little bunny caught and is squeezing its little life out, so I thought if I approached maybe it would release & let bunny go free. As I got closer, it sure enough squawked at me and then took to flight, with the prey still in its claws, and thank goodness for that, as it had a snake in its grasp! (*Get 'em all*)

But hearing the news about playing it safe on the Mike Miller Park Trails, made me think of our gospel today, along with it being Mother's day, today. Twice in this very short gospel, Jesus describes a Good Shepherd's care, as holding eternally safely, whatever is in his hands. He says of his sheep, "No one can take them out of my hand." (& then in the next verse, Jn 10:28, He follows up by adding , "No one can take them from the Father's hand"). So, in our Good Shepherd's hands/care, we are safe and no one can snatch us from Him. He has got us! And that describes for me not just a Good Shepherd, but that also describes a good mom! **A mom has her little ones in her eyes or in her hands all the time.** No one gets between them. So, I want to add a little commercial here! Happy Mother's Day to all our moms today. We thank God for you , and we thank you for you, as all that we have, has come from you, as you (with our fathers) have given us birth & life and we thank and honor you today for it! I think of a mother's love when I hear Jesus describe His good shepherding care. He holds and protects us, just as our moms did for so long as we were raised in their care, and brought up as her little ones. I asked last Mother's day and ask it again today, "Apart from God, is there any power, any force in the universe greater than a

mother's love?" Physicists will talk about the strong force of atoms, which is that binding strength that holds protons to protons within a nucleus, and electrons to bind around them. But I suggest a mother's love is stronger than that! **Because**, ask yourself, "What could get between a mother and her child?" Nothing! I caution you not to try breaking that force! I propose, that apart from God's love of us (as Romans 8:38-39 tells that 'nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus....") that a mother's love is the next strongest force in the universe. So God blesses moms that way for us, with such Christ-like love as Jesus demonstrates in His good shepherding care of us.

So how about our moms, being good shepherds in our lives, too? I see two aspects of good shepherds in our moms, coming from Jesus' descriptions today. *Their Eyes & vision, and their ears and voices*. So, let's start with the ears and voices. Jesus says He calls His sheep by name, and **they hear his voice!** My mom sure taught us kids that! She definitely had our ears, and knew how to get our attention. Jesus said his sheep know his voice uniquely. Don't we know our mother's voices, and TONES. For example, we can tell the difference between when we are being called to dinner, and when we are being called for chores. But, especially we know that tone when it came as a reprimand & calling down! I knew that to hear a formal address, such as, "Mr Johnson" or worse the middle name, "Brian Anthony...." Then, I had it! But, Jesus added another dimension of good shepherding that involved keeping one's eyes on the prize, watching over their sheep. Like good mothers who always have their kids in their sights, tuned into them like a radio signal or locked on to them like a laser beam; Moms see everything. In our home growing up, we often had a ritual we went through with mom, when we might come bouncing down the stairs and she would meet us in the hallway, saying, "Stop be careful, get on your knees help me look for my contact (back in the days of hard lenses). But a funny thing was that we kids never found it, she was always the one to find it with her own eyes- "Here it is" she'd always say!" She had the eyes. Like watchful shepherds always scanning the horizon for dangers, moms see everything. Another example of this: Maybe we kids got home from playing in the park and mom might meet us on the porch and say, "So, you were picking on Danny, again?" I'd ask, "How do you know?" She'd say, "Moms know everything their kids do-Remember that we have eyes everywhere- ways of finding out. Don't moms do that--they can scan a room like Doppler radar, seeing and taking note of everything!" Moms master those skills! Like a good shepherd with eyes peeled on their sheep, moms always have their

kids in sight. And another way that we kids learned about how good mom's eyes were, was at the grocery, if we were allowed to go with her shopping. Here is proof: Just try slipping in that snack box of Cheez-Its or Chips Ahoy, and see how little time it stays in basket-she scooped them right back out on to the shelf again, within a minute! But we also learned how mom could work things out, and we never knew anything about it. Because she could just as surprisingly sneak us some treats home without us ever seeing them. After the grocery trip, we might be unpacking the tall brown paper grocery bags later, and she'd say "Those Milky Way candy bars are for you, if you behave and finish your chore" Mothers can squeeze in those special treats without us kids ever knowing how it happens! But that is another example of how God cares for us, and how He provides for us, even if through other hands that He has created for us. Mothers are another of God's blessings for us, another channel for us to receive His graces- From Him, but given to us through those closet to us: Mothers come to us from God's ever-provident hands, and aren't we so thankful for them?