



IV SUNDAY OF EASTER

GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

(What are we to do?)

In today's First Reading, we heard the question: "What are we to do, my brothers?" That question was addressed to Saint Peter and the Apostles after Jesus rose from the dead. Like you there and me here, those who asked the question heard how Jesus, *a Man commended to us by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs which God worked through Him was crucified*. They heard how that same Jesus – Who was thought to be dead – was seen outside the empty tomb by a woman weeping, was seen inside the Upper Room by men who were afraid and doubting, and was seen on the Road to Emmaus by others who were looking downcast. It is in the aftermath of the death of Jesus that these believers ask the question: "What are we to do, my brothers?"

The death of a loved one always leaves people asking: "What are we to do?" And although death is part of our daily experience (800,000 people die each year by their own hands as a result of suicide, 50 million people die each year at the hands of others by abortion, and 9.6 million people die from cancer each year) it is only in these times these so-called "coronavirus times" that we are hearing about it on a daily basis, which prompts me to address it during Holy Mass today.

One of the challenges (and a very practical one) that presents itself in the aftermath of a loved one's death is: "What are we to do with the body in which God chose (through Baptism) to make His dwelling amongst us?" In the Light of that question, and fully aware that voices other than the voice of the Good Shepherd may be (and in fact are) inviting you (and if not you: others) to do things with the body of our loved one/the Temple of God that are not permissible let alone appropriate, I turn to the Successor of Saint Peter (the Pope) and the Apostles (the Bishops) and offer you from them, the teaching of the Church as it was promulgated in 2016, to help you (and others) answer the question: "What are we to do?" There-in we read:

"When, for legitimate motives, cremation of the body has been chosen, the ashes of the faithful must be laid to rest in a sacred place, ... and in order that every appearance of pantheism, naturalism or nihilism be avoided, it is not permitted to scatter the ashes of the departed in the air, on land, at sea or in some other way, nor may they be preserved in mementos, pieces of jewelry, or other objects." (A copy of this instruction can be found on the following three pages.)

Reverence for the body as the dwelling place of God amongst us is the foundation for this teaching. It is in that body, Saint Peter teaches us in today's Second Reading, that we are called to walk in the footsteps of Christ; footsteps that we hope will take us where they took Christ: Heaven; trusting the words we heard Him say in today's Gospel: "I came so that they may have life, and have it more abundantly."

In order for those footsteps to take us where we hope to go, all of us – no matter what Vocation we have been called to: Priesthood, Religious Life, Married Life, or Single Life – those footsteps must first take us where they took Christ; not necessarily the womb of Mary where He was conceived, or Mary's bosom where He was nursed; not necessarily the sea of Galilee where He called the Twelve, wrought miracles, and spoke words of wisdom and peace; and not necessarily to Golgotha where He was crucified, but most

certainly, those footsteps, no matter how hard we may try to avoid it, and even – with wrinkle crème, hair colour, and cosmetic surgery – try to deny it: must take us all to death; as His footsteps took Him.

Now I know those words might cut you to the heart, and that you might be tempted to change the channel and head over to Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, Saint Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre, or anyone of the dozens of Long Island Parishes that didn't make Newsday's "Suggested Live Streaming Events on Long Island", but I encourage you there in Bayville, Sun City, and Toronto to stay with me here in Freeport. You there and me here have walked together this far; with God we can – in the footsteps of Christ – walk even farther. And so you might ask: "What are we to do?"

First of all, as we heard Saint Peter say in response to that question: "Repent." Repent from your fear of death (yours or someone else's). As hard as others may try to avoid death, and to even deny that they are dying, that cannot be the way of us; and why? – Because that was not the way for Jesus. In fact, if after Holy Mass you take out your Bibles and look up the Gospel Passage we heard today (Saint John X:1-10), you will hear Jesus say: "I am the Good Shepherd Who lays down My life for the sheep. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down on My own. I have power to lay it down and power to take it up again".

The power to take it up again was seen by believers weeping, afraid, doubting, and downcast on the third day after the Death of Jesus, and the power to take it up again has been seen for two thousand years ever since that glorious Easter Day. It has been seen during the times we've already addressed during these live streamed Masses: the great depression, 9/11, Hurricane Sandy – and it is being seen now during these times; these "so-called" coronavirus times, when disciples of Christ – you there and me here who have repented from "business as usual", been Baptized, and received the Holy Spirit – walk in the footsteps of Jesus, living life by the anointing of that Spirit; the Way that Christ lived His: faithful to our Vocation. The Priest who continues to "Do this in memory of Me", the Nun who continues to embrace chastity, poverty, and obedience, the spouses who renew daily, their vow to be faithful to one another in good times, and in bad, in sickness and in health, and those in Single Life who are in a State of Life where they embrace the freedom to serve the needs of others whenever those needs present themselves.

Yes, you there – the mother who makes sure the children get washed, dressed, fed, and prepared for Mass; you there – the child faithful to your at home schooling, while remaining faithful to your chores and prayers; you there – the father faithful to your at-home work assignments while remaining faithful to your responsibility – the family at Mass who listens attentively to the Scriptures, presents your offering, and makes a Spiritual Communion! Yes you there, walking in the footsteps of Christ on this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, are showing others how to answer the universal call to holiness. Yes, you there are answering the question: "What are we to do?": "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life" (Revelation II: 10).



Please, while you may not be able to physically *come home* for Holy Mass to manifest your belief in Him, you may express that belief by taking the time to participate in Mass with assistance from your television or computer. If you have access to a computer and the internet, please visit our Parish Website at www.ohreeport.org. If you do not have access to a computer and the internet, but can access a television, please tune into *Catholic Faith Network*: Optimum Channel 29/137; Verizon FiOS TV Channel 296; Spectrum Channel 162/471.



OUR HOLY REDEEMER IS "LIVESTREAMING" SUNDAY MASS

11:30 A.M. in English ✕ 1:00 P.M. in Spanish

Please visit www.ohrfreeport.org for more details