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Good Shepherd Gathering the Straying Sheep

- “Do you resolve as a good shepherd to seek out the sheep who stray and gather them into the Lord’s fold?”
 - One of the most beautiful parts of the right of the ordination of a bishop is the conferral of the pastoral crozier, a symbol of his office as shepherd to God’s people, the sheep entrust to him to care. The principal consecrator says, “Receive the crosier, the sign of your pastoral office, and keep watch over the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit has placed you as Bishop to govern the Church of God.” It’s to be used as the means to reach out and bring sheep back to safety. It’s the “rod and staff” that the Good Shepherd entrusts so as to lead his people through the valley of darkness to verdant pastures, fearing no evil.
 - Apostolorum Successores, the Directory for the Pastoral Life of Bishops, says, that there are many “dynamic images of the Bishop, drawn from Scripture and from the Tradition of the Church, such as the image of the shepherd, the fisherman, the father, the brother, the friend, the comforter, the servant, the teacher, the leader, the *sacramentum bonitatis*.” These, it says, “point to Jesus Christ and characterize the Bishop as a man of faith and discernment, a man of hope and serious commitment, a man of gentleness and compassion, a man of communion” and they “indicate that to enter into the Apostolic succession is to enter into combat for the Gospel.” But it goes to say, “Among the different images, that of the *shepherd* illustrates with particular eloquence the breadth of the episcopal ministry, in that it expresses its meaning, purpose, style and evangelical missionary dynamism. The model of Christ the Good Shepherd suggests to the Bishop daily fidelity to his mission, total and serene dedication to the Church, joy in leading to the Lord the People of God entrusted to his care, and gladness in gathering into the unity of ecclesial communion the scattered children of God (cf. *Mt* 15:24; 10:6). In contemplating the Gospel icon of the Good Shepherd, the Bishop discovers the meaning of constant self-giving, remembering that the Good Shepherd offered his life for his flock (cf. *Jn* 10:11) and came not to be served but to serve” (cf. *Mt* 20:28)(AS 8). Shepherd is the most fitting and synthetic image of all.
 - One of my favorite weeks of the liturgical year is the fourth week of Easter, when we’re able to ponder each year the image of Jesus as our Good Shepherd, focus on how we’re first called to be his good sheep, and then, as his good sheep, become in our own way shepherds of others or at least the Good Shepherd’s sheep dogs. If you’ve been to St. Paul’s Outside the Walls and look at the façade, you see, in a mutually interpreting complementary vertical axis, Christ on the façade, represented first by the Cross, then by his sitting on the throne with an open book saying “My sheep hear my voice. I give them eternal life,” and finally by the Lamb looking as if he has been slain at the top of the mountain of Calvary from which water giving life flows from the temple’s east side in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecy. And coming to drink from the water flowing down from the mountain are twelve sheep, symbolizing the twelve apostles drinking from the living water. They’re sheep before their shepherds, and as shepherds, they’re trying to lead others to imbibe from the same font.
 - In the tenth chapter of John, and in the Gospels, we learn several things of interest to our work as disciples and apostles, as sheep and shepherds:
 - “Whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.” Christ says later, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep.” To be a shepherd, we must have entered into Christ, we must really be living in communion with him, we must not have part of ourselves outside the gate and part of ourselves inside, but have fully entered.
 - “Whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.” — There are some pastors, some priests and bishops, who are there in the sheepfold but not fully in the gate. They’re thieves, robbers, later mercenaries, but not really shepherds.

- “The gatekeeper opens [the gate] for him” — Christ wants to help us enter into him.
- “The sheep hear his voice.” — He speaks. He’s not mute.
- “They recognize his voice” — He speaks in a clearly identifiable way. They will not follow strangers but run away from them “because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”
- “He calls his own sheep by name” — He knows their names. How important this is. Good shepherds work really hard to learn names. For some it’s easy because of memory, like famously for Archbishop-emeritus Henry Mansell of Hartford. Others it requires work. But what a difference it makes. It tells people they are important. That they care enough to get to know their names. My own work with the Sisters of Life.
- “He leads them out.” — We don’t keep them locked in the sheepfold. We lead them out.
- “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.” — We’re trying to lead people to enter into Christ through the gate and go out through Christ to graze, to work in the world, to unite their life in Christ.
- “I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly” — The whole purpose of the faith is to have life to the full. Zoe, not bios. The shepherds need to be full of life to show them this life.
- “A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” — We die out of love for others. Bishop John Barres at his installation to young people, “I will lay down my life for you.”
- “A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep” — Pope Benedict prayed that he wouldn’t run away for fear of the wolves. There are many wolves seeking to attack the sheep. We’re either prepared to die for them or we’ll eventually run away. We have to be ready to die, as we talked about on Tuesday morning. This happens easily when a shepherd looks at the sheep as “not his own.” Clergy sex abuse crisis. Many bishops didn’t have that spiritual paternity, they didn’t know and love the victims and protect them as a father would his own kids, and that’s what scandalized so many lay people.
- “I know my sheep and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father” — The good shepherd and sheep get to know each other intimately, they form a deep filial bond.
- “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead” — We’re caring not just for those who are coming, not just for Catholics, or even Christians, but all those whom the Lord says belong to him. We must lead them too. We need to enlarge the scope, especially as, for the present moment, the church in our area institutionally shrinks.
- “There will be one flock, one shepherd.” — Not Apollos, Cephas and Paul, but Christ. We decrease so that he increases.
- “This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.” — The Father loves us, too, to the extent that in Christ the Good Shepherd, we do the same.”
- Jesus elsewhere gives us two other images that we must ponder:
 - The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So to them he addressed this parable. “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.”
 - We must love all by loving each one. We must go in search. We must risk our life. We must carry, even if they’re going to the bathroom on our shoulder. We must rejoice with that joy. What gives God the greatest joy of all is the return of one of his

lost sheep and that must fill those of us, whose aim is to please God, with similar joy. Work for converts, for reverts, for those whom we're able to help open themselves up to God's action in their life.

- We must make the time and set the proper priorities. Are we about maintenance of the 99 or about the Mission?
- “When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” He then said to him a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” [Jesus] said to him, “Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, “Follow me.””
 - We're called to do more than love Jesus as he has loved us, but to love others as he has loved us.
 - We need to feed with real nourishment, the Word, the Word-made-Flesh.
 - We need to tend and protect from danger.
- The New Evangelization
 - The real thrust of this resolution to seek out, as a good shepherd, the sheep who stray and gather them into the Lord's fold" is to live and lead what the Church has called since 1979 the new evangelization. We need to seek out those who are lost. We need to gather them with Christ, otherwise, he says elsewhere, we're a scatterer. John Paul II writes in *Pastores Gregis*, “With the burning love of a shepherd he goes out in search of the sheep, following in the footsteps of Jesus who says: "I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also and they will hear my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16).” (PG 66).
 - I've preached whole retreats to priests and religious on the new evangelization and it's certainly worth our time. But here I'd like to present just a few thoughts.
 - St. John Paul II
 - CL 34: “Whole countries and nations where religion and the Christian life were formerly flourishing and capable of fostering a viable and working community of faith are now put to a hard test, and in some cases are even undergoing a radical transformation as a result of a constant spreading of an indifference to religion, of secularism and atheism. This particularly concerns countries and nations of the so-called First World in which economic well-being and consumerism, even if coexistent with a tragic situation of poverty and misery, inspires and sustains a life lived "as if God did not exist." This indifference to religion and the practice of religion devoid of true meaning in the face of life's very serious problems are not less worrying and upsetting when compared with declared atheism. Sometimes the Christian faith as well, while maintaining some of the externals of its tradition and rituals, tends to be separated from those moments of human existence which have the most significance, such as, birth, suffering and death. In such cases, the questions and formidable enigmas posed by these situations, if remaining without responses, expose contemporary people to an insoluble delusion or to the temptation of eliminating the truly humanizing dimension of life implicit in these problems. Today ... [our] moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed under the impact of a multiplicity of processes, including secularization and the spread of sects. Only a re-evangelization can assure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom. Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations.”.

- The new evangelization is, therefore, a new type of mission work, directed toward historically Christian countries and people who have heard the Gospel but have not fully responded to it. The message to be proclaimed is not new, for it is still the never changing Gospel of Jesus Christ, but this new evangelization is, according to John Paul II, new in methods, ardor, and expression. In large part, this is a missionary effort directed toward the baptized.
- JP II specified several things about the method:
 - **Prayer** — Jesus gained disciples by prayer. Ratzinger: “We ourselves cannot gather men. We must acquire them by God for God. All methods are empty without the foundation of prayer. The word of the announcement must always be drenched in an intense life of prayer.”
 - **Witness** — RM 42: “People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission
 - **Preaching and Teaching Proper** — RM 44: Proclamation is the permanent priority of mission. The Church cannot elude Christ's explicit mandate, nor deprive men and women of the "Good News" about their being loved and saved by God. "Evangelization will always contain--as the foundation, center and at the same time the summit of its dynamism--a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ...salvation is offered to all people, as a gift of God's grace and mercy." All forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation, which reveals and gives access to the mystery hidden for ages and made known in Christ (cf. Eph 3:3-9; Col 1:25-29), the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church's mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns.
 - **Friendship** — EN 46. For this reason, side by side with the collective proclamation of the Gospel, the other form of transmission, the person-to-person one, remains valid and important. The Lord often used it (for example, with Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman, Simon the Pharisee), and so did the apostles. In the long run, is there any other way of handing on the Gospel than by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith? It must not happen that the pressing need to proclaim the Good News to the multitudes should cause us to forget this form of proclamation whereby an individual's personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique world that he receives from someone else.”
 - Authentic Missionary Spirituality (Holy Spirit) — RM 87-90: “Missionary activity demands a specific spirituality, which applies in particular to all those whom God has called to be missionaries.” It expresses five elements:
 - Complete docility to the Spirit.
 - Intimate communion with Christ.
 - Apostolic charity,
 - Love for the Church.
 - Holiness
- Cardinal Ratzinger
 - Our new Holy Father, Pope Benedict wrote in 2000 about the root cause of a lot of these problems: “A large part of today’s humanity does not find the Gospel in the permanent evangelization of the Church: that is to say the convincing response to the question: How to live? This is why we are searching for, along with permanent and uninterrupted and never to be interrupted evangelization, a new evangelization, capable of being heard by that world that does not find access to "classic" evangelization. Everyone needs the Gospel; the Gospel is destined to all and not only to a specific circle and this is why we are obliged to look for new ways of bringing the Gospel to all.
 - He said: “At the beginning of His public life Jesus says: I have come to evangelize the poor

(Lk 4:18); this means: I have the response to your fundamental question; I will show you the path of life, the path towards happiness – rather: I am that path.” He responds to the deepest poverty, which is the “tediousness of a life considered absurd and contradictory,” a life without joy that produces the inability to love, produces jealousy, avarice, and other destructive responses to the lack of meaning. “This is why we are in need of a new evangelization: if the art of living remains and unknown, nothing else works.”

- Content of the New Evangelization
 - Conversion
 - Jesus
 - Kingdom/Prayer
 - Cross
 - Eternal Life, Judgment
- Pope Francis’ missionary transformation of the Church
 - He gave a history-changing intervention six days before he was elected in which he described that the greatest corruption that happens in the Church is “theological narcissism,” when the Church engages in ecclesial introversion rather than mission, when with spiritual worldliness she begins to live “within herself, of herself and for herself.” Cardinal Bergoglio told the Cardinals what the Church most needed in a new leader. The “next pope” had to be a “man who, from the contemplation and adoration of Jesus Christ, helps the Church to go out of herself to the existential peripheries, who helps her to be a fruitful mother living off the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.” That’s what the Cardinals evidently agreed that the Church needed most and that’s what Pope Francis has been trying to accomplish ever since his election, to reform the Church according to its original Constitution, built on Peter and the apostles as foundation stones but sent to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world, to baptize, and to form people to carry out everything that the Lord has commanded.
 - Pope Francis’ dream for the Missionary Transformation of the Church
 - Pope Francis said in EG 15 that preaching the Gospel is the “first task of the Church.” Indeed, he adds, “today missionary activity still represents the greatest challenge for the Church” and “the missionary task must remain foremost”. What would happen if we were to take these words seriously? We would realize that missionary outreach is *paradigmatic for all the Church’s activity.*”
 - The Church doesn’t just have a mission but *is* a mission and missionary outreach must become the standard for everything the Church does. I repeat his “I have a dream” section of the exhortation: “I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures, can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation.” (EG 27)
 - This requires pastoral conversion to make ordinary pastoral activity more mission-oriented, seeking to invite others to friendship with Jesus. Otherwise there’s the danger of “ecclesial introversion.”
- The Emmaus Scene
 - Let us read once again, in this light, the story of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24:13-15). The two disciples have left Jerusalem. They are leaving behind the “nakedness” of God. They are scandalized by the failure of the Messiah in whom they had hoped and who now appeared utterly vanquished, humiliated, even after the third day (vv. 17-21). Here we have to face the difficult mystery of those people who leave the Church, who, under the illusion of alternative ideas, now think that the Church – their Jerusalem – can no longer offer them anything meaningful and important. So they set off on the road alone, with their disappointment. Perhaps the Church appeared too weak, perhaps too distant from their needs, perhaps too poor to respond to their concerns, perhaps too cold, perhaps too caught up with itself, perhaps a prisoner of its own rigid formulas, perhaps the world seems to have

made the Church a relic of the past, unfit for new questions; perhaps the Church could speak to people in their infancy but not to those come of age. It is a fact that nowadays there are many people like the two disciples of Emmaus; not only those looking for answers in the new religious groups that are sprouting up, but also those who already seem godless, both in theory and in practice.

- Faced with this situation, what are we to do? We need a Church unafraid of going forth into their night. We need a Church capable of meeting them on their way. We need a Church capable of entering into their conversation. We need a Church able to dialogue with those disciples who, having left Jerusalem behind, are wandering aimlessly, alone, with their own disappointment, disillusioned by a Christianity now considered barren, fruitless soil, incapable of generating meaning...
- Since there is no one to accompany them or to show them with his or her own life the true way, many have sought shortcuts, because the standards set by Mother Church seem to be asking too much. There are also those who recognize the ideal of man and of life as proposed by the Church, but they do not have the audacity to embrace it. They think that this ideal is too lofty for them, that it is beyond their abilities, and that the goal the Church sets is unattainable. Nonetheless they cannot live without having at least something, even a poor imitation of what seems too grand and distant. With disappointed hearts, they then go off in search of something that will lead them even further astray, or which brings them to a partial belonging that, ultimately, does not fulfill their lives.
- From this point of view, we need a Church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a Church which accompanies them on their journey; a Church able to make sense of the "night" contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a Church which realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus.
- **I would like all of us to ask ourselves today: are we still a Church capable of warming hearts? A Church capable of leading people back to Jerusalem?** Of bringing them home? Jerusalem is where our roots are: Scripture, catechesis, sacraments, community, friendship with the Lord, Mary and the apostles... Are we still able to speak of these roots in a way that will revive a sense of wonder at their beauty?
- Let us recover the calm to be able to walk at the same pace as our pilgrims, keeping alongside them, remaining close to them, enabling them to speak of the disappointments present in their hearts and to let us address them. They want to forget Jerusalem, where they have their roots, but eventually they will experience thirst. We need a Church capable of accompanying them on the road back to Jerusalem! ... We need a Church that kindles hearts and warms them. We need a Church capable of restoring citizenship to her many children who are journeying, as it were, in an exodus
- Aparecida Document and the Formation to be Missionary Disciples in Communion
- The greatest pastoral achievement of Cardinal Bergoglio before his election to the papacy was the Aparecida document from 2007.
 - Cardinal Bergoglio was the chairman of the team of CELAM bishops to put together the 2007 concluding document of the Aparecida Conference, the fifth General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, which is one of the most significant documents ever published by the Church. It's the master plan for the New Evangelization in Latin America. But it also gives crucial insights for the new evangelization anywhere.
 - Everyone, it stressed, is called to be a "missionary disciple in communion." Everywhere is mission territory and everything in the Church is mission-driven. Focused on the encounter with Jesus Christ. It doesn't blame the problems on money from the North, sheep stealing or other things, but on something missing in the preaching and living of the Gospel among Catholics. The answer is a "permanent catechesis," an ongoing encounter with Jesus, deepened spiritually through the Bible and the Eucharist.
 - It was, as George Weigel said, a document of a Church that intends to go on "evangelical

offense: it will be all Gospel, all proposal, all evangelism, all the time.”

- It is a classic passage that sums up the problem and the response:
 - The church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission and relaunch it with fidelity and boldness in the new circumstances of Latin America and the world. It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats, or those who seek to cloak the variety and complexity of situations with a mantle of worn-out ideological slogans, or irresponsible attacks. What is required is confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the newness of the Gospel rooted in our history, out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries. That depends not so much on grand programs and structures, but rather on new men and women who incarnate that tradition and newness, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, protagonists of new life for a Latin America that seeks to be rediscovered with the light and power of the Spirit.
 - A Catholic faith reduced to mere baggage, to a collection of rules and prohibitions, to fragmented devotional practices, to selective and partial adherence to the truths of faith, to occasional participation in some sacraments, to the repetition of doctrinal principles, to bland or nervous moralizing, that does not convert the life of the baptized would not withstand the trials of time. . . . We must all start again from Christ, recognizing [with Pope Benedict XVI] that “being Christian is . . . the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”
 - We Christians must start over from Christ, from contemplation of Him who has revealed to us in his mystery, the complete fulfillment of the human vocation and its meaning. We need to become docile disciples, to learn from Him, in following him, the dignity and fullness of life. We likewise need to be consumed by missionary zeal, to bring to the heart of the culture of our time that unifying and full meaning of human life that neither science, nor politics, nor economics, nor the media can provide. In Christ the Word, God’s Wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30), culture can again find its center and depth, from which reality may be viewed with all its aspects together, discerning them in the light of the Gospel and granting to each its place and proper dimension.
 - The point is to configure disciples to Jesus, the Master, the Way, the Life, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to the acceptance of his commandment to live, to practice the Beatitudes, his own style of life, including sharing his fate, and living as members of his body in communion, nourished by God’s word and the Eucharist.
- In our Church we should work along four lines, it said:
 - *Religious experience.* In our Church we must offer all our faithful “a personal encounter with Jesus Christ,” a profound and intense religious experience, a *kerygmatic* proclamation and the personal witness of the evangelizers that leads to a personal conversion and to a thorough change of life.
 - *Community life.* Our faithful are seeking Christian communities where they are accepted fraternally and feel valued, visible, and included in the Church. Our faithful must really feel that they are members of an ecclesial community and stewards of its development. That will allow for greater commitment and self-giving in and for the Church.
 - *Biblical and doctrinal formation.* Along with a strong religious experience and notable community life, our faithful need to deepen knowledge of the word of God and the contents of the faith, because that is the only way to bring their religious experience to maturity. Along this strongly experiential and communal path, doctrinal formation is not experienced as theoretical and cold knowledge, but as a fundamental and necessary tool in spiritual, personal and community growth.

- *Missionary commitment of the entire community.* is concerned about their situation so as to attract them once more to the Church and invite them to return to it.
- Necessary aspects of the formation of missionary disciples in communion
 - *The Encounter with Jesus Christ:* Those who will be his disciples are already seeking him (cf. Jn 1:38), but it is the Lord who calls them: “Follow me” (Mk 1:14; Mt 9:9). The deeper meaning of the search must be discovered, and the encounter with Christ that leads to Christian initiation must be fostered. This encounter must be constantly renewed by personal testimony, proclamation of the *kerygma*, and the missionary action of the community. The *kerygma* is not simply a stage, but the leitmotiv of a process that culminates in the maturity of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Without the *kerygma*, the other aspects of this process are condemned to sterility, with hearts not truly converted to the Lord. Only out of the *kerygma* does the possibility of a true Christian initiation occur. Hence, the Church should have it present in all its actions
 - *Conversion:* It is the initial response of those who have listened to the Lord in wonder, who believe in Him through the action of the Spirit, and who decide to be His friend and go with him, changing how they think and live, accepting the cross of Christ, conscious that dying to sin is attaining life. In Baptism and the sacrament of Reconciliation Christ’s Redemption is actualized for us.
 - *Discipleship:* The person constantly matures in knowledge, love, and following of Jesus the master, and delves deeper into the mystery of His person, his example, and his teaching. Ongoing catechesis and sacramental life are of fundamental importance for this stage; they strengthen initial conversion, and enable missionary disciples to persevere in Christian life and mission in the midst of the world that challenges them.
 - *Communion:* There can be no Christian life except in community: in families, parishes, communities of consecrated life, base communities, other small communities, and movements. Like the early Christians who met in community, the disciples take part in the life of the Church, and in the encounter with brothers and sisters, living the love of Christ in solidarity, in fraternal life. They are also accompanied and encouraged by the community and its shepherds as they mature in the live of the Spirit.
 - *Mission:* As they get to know and love their Lord, disciples experience the need to share with others their joy at being sent, at going to the world to proclaim Jesus Christ, dead and risen, to make real the love and service in the person of the neediest, in short, to build the Kingdom of God. Mission is inseparable from discipleship, and hence it must not be understood as a stage subsequent to formation, although it is carried out in different ways, depending on one’s own vocation and on the moment in human and Christian maturation at which the person stands.
- Conclusion
 - “Do you resolve as a good shepherd to seek out the sheep who stray and gather them into the Lord’s fold?” Let us ask the Good Shepherd, who invites us to enter into the Gate anew during this retreat, strengthen us to go out with him to continue this task counting on his working through us like he worked through Peter, James, John, John Paul, Benedict, Francis, Josemaria and so many before us.