



SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES SEMINARY

New Heart, New Spirit.

April 2008

Dear Friends of Saint Francis de Sales Seminary,

On Sunday, April 13, the Church celebrated the Fourth Sunday of Easter, known throughout the world as Good Shepherd Sunday. The Gospel for this annual celebration is usually from the 10th chapter of John where Jesus offers a beautiful meditation on his identity as both the gate for the sheep to pass to the Father and the shepherd who leads the sheep to life. We clearly see in these powerful images the iconic identity of Jesus as the human incarnation of the Father's love, mercy and care, the one who lays down his life for the sheep.

Through his radiant humanity, powerful preaching, table fellowship with sinners, healings of the sick, proclamation of mercy and forgiveness, exorcisms of evil spirits, feeding of the multitudes, patience with the apostles, humble foot-washing, institution of the Eucharist, suffering and death on the cross and glorious resurrection, Jesus Christ brings abundant life to the human race, enfleshing God's burning desire to be in eternal loving relationship with every human person. Christ is the primordial sacrament of the invisible God.

The Church, in turn, is the sacrament of Christ, continuing his work of redemption through time and space, in every country, language and culture until the end of the world. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the sacraments, religious formation, service of the sick and poor, action for social justice and peace, education, counseling and health care, to list just a few of the central activities of the Church, this ecclesia, this group of believers anointed by the Holy Spirit and sent forth to transform the world, is an icon of Jesus, making his merciful presence heard, felt and seen.

As servants, ministers and leaders of the Church, priests play a key role in this ongoing drama of salvation. The ordained priesthood exists in order to minister to the priesthood of the baptized, so that the latter can fully live their vocation in the world. As an icon of Jesus the Good Shepherd, the priest does not fulfill a job, but rather, lives a vocation. Like religious, consecrated persons, married couples, deacons and lay ministers, the priest is called by the Lord to make a radical gift of himself for the sake of the Church. Ministry is not on his terms. Every time people empty themselves of self and pour out their life for others, God's grace and life increase in this world.

I am thinking of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who spent three hundred days' wages to buy a costly perfume to anoint the feet of Jesus. When we break open the alabaster jar of our lives, the world is filled with the fragrance of Christ. Do you have any thoughts about all of this? Where do you see icons of Christ the Good Shepherd? Please write back! Send responses to newheartnewspirit@sfs.edu.

Faithfully in Christ,
Fr. Don Hying

Previous issues of my New Heart New Spirit newsletter can be read on our website at <http://www.sfs.edu/nhns/index.html>.