

Transcript of Padre Gildo's Sermon (English)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Please receive fraternal greetings from your sister parishes, St. Rita in Saba and St. Esteban in Rio Esteban, Honduras.

I must thank my friends, Fr. Tim and Fr. Antony, for receiving me and allowing me to share the word of God with all of you. I also extend my gratitude to my friend, Jorge Castro, for receiving me in his home, and translating for me, along with my other translators - Jose, Cecilia, and Raphael.

This Sunday, the Church prays for all vocations, especially for those vocations consecrated to the Church. It is therefore fitting that in today's liturgy, Jesus is defined as the "Good Shepherd" because he knows his sheep. He calls each one of them by name. His sheep hear his voice, and they follow him. None of them will fail because he holds them in his hand and gives them eternal life.

In the midst of so many cheap and easy temptations, in a world where false prophets abound; where pseudo-Messiahs take advantage of the ignorance, disorganization, and weakness of many of the sheep, they have no difficulty in exploiting and mistreating them. That is why it is comforting today to listen to the words of Jesus Christ, our true Shepherd, and hear his words of trust, hope, and unity. He was deserving of the title "Good Shepherd" because he gave his life for his flock – for each one of us is a part of his flock.

In the midst of the great variety of cultures, languages and races, Christ wants one flock. He doesn't want our differences to divide us or to pitch us against one another. On the contrary, he wants those differences - cultural, economic, technological, etc. - to compliment us, to allow us to grow, to become strong, and to unite us as one flock.

For this, we are grateful to God and to all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, because with our parochial brotherhood, we have overcome prejudices and boundaries, and have united as one flock, producing and gathering many fruits and blessings. What you need, you have found in our parishes, and what our parishes need, we have found in you.

We are making the dream of the beloved Pope, John Paul II a reality: *"To form one whole Church in the Americas"* and to generate life, hope, solidarity, and communion.

Of course, there are still many challenges ahead, as many here as in Honduras. We have many sheep that live without a shepherd, without belonging to, or being identified with a flock. It is a task for all of us to continue working on this mission, just as St. Paul, Barnabas, or the other apostles did. They were brave in daring to announce the Good News of the kingdom of God, not only to their own, but to foreigners.

Your presence in our parishes gives us strength to continue with our evangelical mission. I congratulate those that have come to share and lived with us for a few days. I wish to mention especially, Jeanne Girsch, who in spite of her age, has been with us in two different occasions.

With God's grace and working together, we have already transformed places and people. We don't know how much longer we have to walk together, but we remain secure, knowing that we continue the journey united in faith, prayer, liturgy, and in a very special way, the Eucharist – through which we experience the unity that exists in the Church throughout the world, sharing this great mystery of love, in which Christ, the "Good Shepherd" gives himself to us as food for eternal life.

I would like to thank you for your prayers, your fraternal friendship, your generous gifts and the wonderful fiesta you prepared for me last night. May God continue blessing each and every one of you and your families, and help you bring all your work to fruition.

Thank you very much.

Translated by Jorge Castro and Cecilia Kornegay