

Hi everyone,
“I came so that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

The world puts forth its own version of what abundant life looks like. Big house, a couple of cars, money, gadgets and just a myriad amount of stuff in our houses and garages and storage sheds. All these things in and of themselves are not bad; it's what we do with and how we allow these things to control our lives that becomes the danger. Do all these things bring happiness to our lives? A true lasting happiness? At best, it's fleeting. Our stuff wears out, gets old. We desire new, bigger and better! But where does it stop? What drives us to more than what we need? Is it to please our own egos? To be better than the Joneses? Most often the world treats us as failures if we do not achieve a certain status through the collection of things.

But there must be better way. A way that is more peaceful, less stressful! That way is the abundant life that Jesus offers to us. To illustrate; I'll us the three P's to abundant life theory.

Protection: Jesus is the good shepherd. He leads us to the sheepfold to protect us. In Jesus' time the sheepfold was meant to keep the sheep in and the wolves out. Our Cluster is our sheepfold. Jesus has led us here. In our numbers we find our strength. We are committed to doing the will of God as we reach out in love to each other. As this isolation appears to keep us apart physically, we must continue to remain a community through our spiritual ties. Our same beliefs. Our caring and compassion in our prayer for each other. We can be strong against the snares of the world so long as we do not forget that we are one in Christ. We know that with Christ in the lead as our Shepherd, we are safe and sound and find our second P...

Provisions: Jesus provides us with the graces we need to survive in and move through the world safely. In reconciliation we receive the gift of forgiveness from God and in our turn must forgive others. Even though at this time when we are separated from Our Lord in Eucharist; we can make a spiritual communion. Receive him deep within our hearts with the desire that absence brings. This virus would rip us apart but, let us become one in the body of Christ as He fills us with his love and peace. In these sacraments and in this community, we experience the 3rd P of abundant life and that is...

Presence: Jesus was raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of God, but he is not just in some heaven light years away. He promised us, that where two or more are gathered there I am in your midst. We seem to find ourselves alone lately in isolation, but we can rely on our belief in the communion of Saints. We are never alone as we call on those who have gone before us to pray with us. Jesus becomes present to us as we read and meditate on His Word. He fills us with peace and hope. In our prayer, in our quiet time, we invite Him into our hearts, and He takes up residence there to hold us in a loving embrace, to guide us through the world and keep us safe.

Perhaps the analogy of Jesus as the Good Shepherd means less to us today because we do not live close to the flocks. Our only thought of sheep is when we're wearing a wool sweater or buying lamb chops. It comes down to this; Jesus knows us, knows us each by name and desires that we have life abundantly. We belong to him and He takes care of his own even if like sheep, we tend to wander away from the flock. This story of the Good Shepherd tells us that Jesus will gather us, protect us, provide for us and always be present to us even when the world wants to do its best to snatch us away from Him.

Easter joy to you and yours! Please be safe.

Deacon Ed