June 5th: Memorial of Saint Boniface, Bishop and Martyr

Gospel text (*Jn* 10:11-16): «I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Not so the hired hand or any other person who is not the shepherd and to whom the sheep do not belong. They abandon the sheep as soon as they see the wolf coming; then the wolf snatches and scatters the sheep. This is because the hired hand works for pay and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father. Because of this I give my life for my sheep».

«The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep»

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(Tarragona, Spain)

Today, we commemorate St. Boniface, bishop and martyr, who lived between the 7th and 8th centuries. Christ's words seen in today's Gospel reverberate in the center of the liturgy: through His passion and death, He has revealed himself as the Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, and in His resurrection He has given us the confidence that He lives forever and leads his flock to eternal life.

The universal Church is embodied in the diocese and its pastoral mission pulsates in the parishes. The parish is a small part of the Church: a part of this great "flock" that looks at the Good Shepherd with faith and hope. Pope Francis tells us: «the parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community».

In today's liturgy, Christ considers Himself not only "the shepherd", but also he who "lays down his life for the sheep". In this way, Jesus combines two different and particularly significant metaphors. The "shepherd" image is opposed to the "victim's", and it serves to underline Jesus' deep concern for his flock, which is us, to the point of totally laying down himself for our salvation: "the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11).

As a sainted shepherd, Boniface, in one of his letters, tells us: "We are not muted dogs, nor tacit observers, nor mercenaries who flee before the wolves; we are instead diligent pastors who watch over the flock of Christ».

It is up to us to recognize in Him the only Lord and follow «His voice» (Jn 10:4), by avoiding to assign these characteristics to any human conceit, which, ultimately, «cares nothing for the sheep» (Jn 10:13),

but only for its own interest.