November 4th: Memorial of Saint Charles Borromeo, Bishop

Gospel text (*Jn* 10:11-16): Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

“A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”

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Today, the Church celebrates the sanctity of a great shepherd of souls: Saint Charles Borromeo, who was bishop of the diocese of Milan. We must all thank the Good Lord because he has never ceased to provide us with good shepherds. Precisely, the times of St. Charles were in need of a profound reform, especially in the clergy. Today's saint was fully involved in the Council of Trent (the "counter-reform" council) and in the application of his decrees, particularly in his own diocese.

Today's Gospel text points to two qualities for a "good shepherd." First, "a good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn 10:11). The good shepherd is not content to comply, he does not work piecework: sheep are the reason for his life and his activity. And, secondly, for this same reason, he knows his sheep (cf. Jn 10:14).

Saint Charles Borromeo was a descendant of a very rich family. He gave up everything to devote himself 100% to the service of the Church (not "piecework"). He resisted the various traps - honors, pomp, luxuries ... - so prevalent among clergy, bishops and cardinals of those times. His shield bore only one word: "Humilitas." The true reformers are bombproof saints...

Saint Charles did not take the pastoral task as an occupation among others: the attention of souls and praying were his life. And, therefore, he traveled and toured the territories of his immense diocese (which also included Venice, Switzerland ...) to meet his people and tend to them. And if in some case he used the possible influences due to their family ancestry, he did it to benefit the most disadvantaged.

All the faithful People must correspond and watch over this great gift of God that the priestly ministry

means. As Saint John Vianney - the holy parish priest of Ars – said: "the priesthood is the love of the Heart of Jesus."