

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, April 21, 2024
Fourth Sunday of Easter
Cycle B

I remember the first time I came here, to the Diocese of Monterey, it was the late Bishop Rich Garcia who had received me personally. He was very fatherly and very down to earth. And from that moment I knew in my heart that I was in good hands. And I was right, for the few years I've spent in the Diocese with him as a Bishop, he was like a father to me and that made me feel at home. Bishop Ryan was already retired at the time, so I rarely met him. I only had the opportunity to meet him during our priest retreat and priest study days when he was present. I remember during one of our retreats Bishop Ryan was there greeting some priests, so I also went to greet him. To my surprise, he greeted me with, "Hello, Romeo! I've heard good things about you." Then he gave me a tight hug. It struck me that he knew my name. It made me feel honored, affirmed, and yes, loved.

Those experiences with the two Bishops made me realize an important thing in my life as a priest, especially on what it meant to be a good shepherd. When I received my first assignment as a pastor here at Resurrection, I made a promise to myself to try my best at least to memorize the names of the people whom I will be serving.

"I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father", Jesus said in the Gospel today. Intimate knowledge and sharing of life mark the relationship of the shepherd with his flock. When I was new in this parish, I remember being so anxious and overly concerned about what I would be sharing to the community in terms of homilies, in the ministries, and other church concerns. After a few years of being part of this beautiful community, these things still concern me. I consider them an important part of my

priestly ministry – but not as much, compared to presenting myself as a friend and father to the people in this parish community.

I know I haven't perfected this art of pastoring. My natural shyness and introvert nature can still get in the way. But I believe I'm getting there. I know now that my person and my friendship are the most important gifts I can give to my parishioners. And I truly believe that community life is not just about work and ministries, but more so about personal relationships.

As Jesus reminded all of us today when He said, "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me".