



7 May 2026

## “The qualities of a true shepherd”

Regarding the Petrine office, we emphasized yesterday that when Jesus called Peter to his ministry of shepherding the sheep, He asked him about his love and then entrusted him with the task of feeding them (John 21:15–19).

We further considered that the Pope’s ministry consists, in particular, in authentically transmitting Christ’s teaching through the centuries until the day of His return at the end of time, for the Church has understood Peter’s calling as an appointment to a universal pastoral office. In this context, it must be emphasized how important it is that the Church remain protected from heresies and reject them, so that their poison does not penetrate the Body of Christ.

In what follows, I would like to highlight a few points that are indispensable for a true shepherd of the Church.

### The readiness for martyrdom

The passage from Sacred Scripture cited yesterday draws attention to something very essential that applied both to Saint Peter and to the many popes and bishops who have served as shepherds of the Christian flock over the centuries.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.’ This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God. And after this he said to him, ‘Follow me.’”* (John 21:18–19)

The shepherd who follows his Lord must be ready to lay down his life for the sheep. He must be fundamentally ready to accept martyrdom, just as his Lord and Master did (John 10:11–15). This is the greatest act of love—and this is how the Church has always viewed it. This willingness to suffer martyrdom for Jesus’ sake is a hallmark of the call to such a ministry and defines the true shepherd.

## Following the Lord

With the words “*Follow me*” (John 21:19), the Lord addresses concrete discipleship. This applies not only to martyrdom, but to imitating the Lord in all aspects that He, as Master, has intended for the shepherd. The shepherd of the sheep must take up the cross of such a calling for the Lord’s sake. Always and everywhere, he must take responsibility to ensure that the Gospel is taught correctly and spread as widely as possible, and that the sacraments are administered worthily. He must counteract every possible abuse.

## The Spiritual Battle

This provokes hostility, which he must face, as we have known from Jesus from the very beginning. For although people are attuned to the Lord’s message—God has placed the truth in their hearts—the Gospel is often not simply received with joy, but rejected. Therefore, the shepherd must arm himself accordingly and realize that the rejection of the Gospel is not merely a manifestation of human aversion or ignorance, but that demons are also at work. The battle must thus be waged on multiple levels. For this, the shepherd must be equipped and put on the armor of God (cf. Eph 6:11–18).

## Guidance by the Holy Spirit

The shepherd is led down paths he does not choose for himself. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it is God Himself who directs his life, fastening the “belt” upon him so that he may exercise his office in His name. He is “bound to Christ” and must be entirely at His disposal.

## Spiritual training

For this to happen, a consistent spiritual path is necessary—one capable of protecting a pope or another shepherd from within. This is all the more important since external obligations can easily consume him and place excessive demands on him. The inner fire of Christ’s love, however, needs regular nourishment to keep burning. Great attention and discipline are required here. Even if the Pope is surrounded by good and wise advisors, he still needs his own spiritual discernment to recognize the Lord’s way in all things and to make the right decisions. Spiritual training is indispensable for this.

## Vigilance and Strength

These are particularly important for a Pope or for shepherds, for the flock is attacked by wolves who often disguise themselves as sheep. This applies not only to hostility from external enemies, which is often easier to recognize, but especially to enemies from within who seek to destroy the Church or co-opt her into their service. Let us hear the voice of the vigilant shepherd, St. Pius X:

*“The partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church’s open enemies; they lie hid within her very bosom and heart. We allude to many who belong to the ranks of the priesthood itself, who, feigning a love for the Church, vaunt themselves as reformers of the Church; and, forming more boldly into line of attack, assail all that is most sacred in the work of Christ. They lay the axe not to the branches and shoots, but to the very root, that is, to the faith and its deepest fibres. And having struck at this root of immortality, they proceed to disseminate poison through the whole tree.”* (Pius X, Encyclical Pascendi Dominici Gregis, 1907)

Vigilance must be combined with the spirit of discernment. Without a doubt, the Lord will equip His shepherds so that, in His strength, they may oppose everything that stands against the Lord and His Anointed One. This is part of the equipment of a good shepherd.

NOTE: Since today is the 7th day of the month, which we always dedicate in a special way to our Heavenly Father, we want to invite you to listen to the "3 minutes for Abba", which is a small impulse that we publish daily in order to deepen the relationship of trust with God the Father. You can find them in the following links:

-Telegram: <https://t.me/threeminutesforAbba>

-Webpage: <http://en.elijamission.net/category/3-minutes-for-god-the-father/>

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Reflection on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/listening-to-god-2/>

Reflection on today's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/remain-in-my-love/>