

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OT - B -2021

"Like a good neighbor, State Farm is there."

I couldn't get that familiar jingle out of my head as I read today's Gospel.

"Like a good shepherd, Jesus is there."

See what I mean?

Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah declaring that God will appoint good and just shepherds for his flock.

Indeed, God becomes our shepherd in and through Jesus.

And as we heard in last Sunday's Gospel, Jesus shares his ministry of shepherding with his apostles and their successors.

This week we see the apostles returning to Jesus full of the stories of what they had done and taught.

Jesus wants to take them away for a little "R and R," but his compassion for the persistent crowds moves his heart to pity for them, "for they were like sheep without a shepherd."

The Catholic Community of Merrillville has been minus one shepherd since the death of Fr. James Meade.

Last weekend we learned how we are going to move forward.

The ultimate goal for Merrillville will be one parish with a Catholic school and an additional worship site.

The backside of the Bishop's letter outlined the proposed transition process.

The first step will be the appointment of a new pastor for St. Andrew's who will also serve as administrator of SS. Peter and Paul and St. Joan of Arc.

Eventually ... in one or two years perhaps ... that priest will become pastor of Our Lady of Consolation Parish as well, and he will be given an associate priest.

At that point, I will move on to a new assignment.

Please understand that it was my choice not to become the "pope of Merrillville."

I felt that perhaps a younger man could better take on that responsibility.

In the meantime I look forward to working with the new pastor of St. Andrew's - whoever he may be -

.... as together our communities envision the best way to live as a vibrant, caring, and discipleship-driven Catholic presence here in southcentral Lake County.

And, "Like a good shepherd, Jesus will be there."