



In his homily at Mass in the Casa Santa Marta on Friday morning, Pope **Francis reminds bishops and all pastors to “love, tend the sheep, and prepare oneself for the cross”**, not wasting time meddling in the lives of others.

Pope Francis at Mass on Friday had words of advice for all pastors. He told them to “love, shepherd your flock, and prepare oneself for the cross” and not to fall into the temptation of “sticking their nose in other people’s business.”

His advice was drawn from the Gospel of John, which recounts the last encounter between Jesus and Peter.

‘Follow me’

Pope Francis said Jesus leads Peter on a mental journey through their relationship. Jesus, the Pope said, wants to do the same for each of us, so that we “recall our shared journey.”

The Holy Father transformed Jesus’ last words to Peter – “Follow me” – into concrete attitudes and behaviors, giving Peter three directives: “love me, tend my sheep, and prepare yourself.”

Love is identity of pastor

The first step towards being true disciples of the Son of God, he said, is love. The Pope then said tending the Lord's sheep and caring for them is an essential part of the pastor's identity. "The identity of a bishop and of a priest is to be a shepherd," he said.

"Love me, tend my sheep, and prepare yourself. Love me more than all others. Love me however you can, but love me. This is what the Lord asks of pastors and of all of us. 'Love me.' The first step in dialogue with the Lord is love."

'Carry you where you don't want to go'

Pope Francis reminded the faithful that those who embrace the Lord fully are destined for "martyrdom" and "to carry the cross", that is, to be led where they do not want to go. But this, he said, is the compass directing the pastor.

"Prepare for trials; prepare to leave everything behind, so that another may come and do different things. Prepare yourself for this obliteration in life. And they will carry you along paths filled with humiliation, possibly even to martyrdom. Those who praised you and spoke well of you when you were a pastor will now speak poorly of you because another has come who they like more. Prepare yourself for the cross when they carry you where you do not want to go. Love, tend, and prepare yourself. This is a pastor's directional map, his compass."

'Don't be a busybody'

In conclusion, Pope Francis focused on one final, pervasive temptation: the desire to meddle in the lives of others, without being content with minding one's own business.

"Put yourself in your own shoes, and don't stick your nose in other people's business."

The pastor loves, tends, and prepares himself for the cross... Don't waste time being a busybody, even regarding ecclesiastical rumors. Love, tend my sheep, and prepare yourself not to fall into temptation."