

Homily for the Funeral Mass of Sr. Mary Andrew Matesich, OP
Christ the King Chapel, Ohio Dominican University, June 20, 2005
by Bishop James Griffin

Whenever I hear that good shepherd image in the gospel, I think of the time that I spent, as a student of Italian, living with shepherds in the hills of Italy. There I learned first hand the truth of those lines we just heard: “he calls his own by name and leads them out...he walks in front of them and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice.” None of the din and the dust and the daring which we associate with our “cowboys.” The shepherd merely opens the gate to the enclosure where the sheep have spent the night, and begins to walk towards the pasture he has chosen for the day, talking or singing to his sheep as he goes.

And the sheep follow; do they follow. Quietly, but determinedly. No distraction, no inconvenience, no obstacle deters them. The sheep follow the shepherd’s lead with a quiet but determined dedication.

A quiet but determined dedication to following the lead of the shepherd; that thought may well serve as the catalyst to bring together the bits and pieces of the life of Sister Mary Andrew which each of us brings this morning, as we try, individually and collectively, to thank God for the gift of her life.

Sister Mary Andrew lived a life of dedicated determination.

She was dedicated to her own family, the font from which she first learned of the good shepherd and whose members modeled for her what it meant to follow his lead. She was never too busy to talk about her family, and she lit up with joy as she shared these stories with you.

Sister Mary Andrew was determinedly dedicated to education. She was dedicated in her pursuit of her own education, which she saw as a guide to the path along which the good shepherd was leading her. She was dedicated to the education of others, which she saw as a way to share the great gifts and insights of her own life. That dedication to share learning was manifested in a myriad of ways as she led the development of Ohio Dominican University, but most clearly, I believe, in her attitude towards students who arrived on this campus as the first in their family to pursue a college education. She guided and encouraged and directed these students with a most special love and consideration.

Sister Mary Andrew was dedicated to the local community. This dedication was attested to by many organizations and committees and boards who offered her membership. And the strength of that determined dedication is attested to by the legacy she left them, as well as by the recognition and honors which she received, locally, state-wide, nationally and beyond.

But, most importantly, Sister Mary Andrew was dedicated to her Dominican community. No matter what the setting or circumstances or situation in which people first met Sister Mary

Andrew, it was quickly made clear by her word and by her actions, that she was a Dominican religious, and that this core identity was the heart of her life. It was the hub, the center of all those other dedicated pursuits. This Dominican community was the storehouse from which she drew her great enthusiasms and energies. It was “the” setting in which she recognized the leading voice of the good shepherd.

As we thank God this morning for her life, a life certainly “worth living” from every perspective, each of us brings, as I mentioned earlier, a piece or some pieces of the mosaic which was her life. This morning, we seek to lovingly draw those pieces together, to see the totality of her determined dedication. We marvel at the pictures these collected pieces form for us. We meditate on the beauty and depth of the lessons which that picture of Sister Mary Andrew’s life presents for our own life. We re-dedicate ourselves to listening quietly for the ever-beckoning voice of the good shepherd and to following that call with determined dedication, even into the valley of death.