

**Mass with St. James School Students
May 18, 2018**

It is a very interesting time of year. We are coming to the end of a lot of things right now. We are coming to the end of the school year here at St. James Catholic School. We are coming to the end of spring and the beginning of summer. And, in the Church, we are coming to the end of the Easter Season. Pentecost is just two days away! Endings can be hard sometimes. You have to say goodbye to people, and you have to change the way you have been living your life every day. But endings are a good place to take a look at ourselves and see where we are – and where we are going.

St. Peter had one of these moments in the Gospel of today. Jesus was about to ascend to the Father – just like we celebrated in the Mass last weekend. Peter sat down with Jesus to have one last talk between the two of them. Peter was probably hoping to get some big secret that would help him lead the Church now that Jesus was going back to heaven. But what did Jesus tell him? He asked Peter, “Do you love me?” and then told him, “Feed my sheep.” Just that. So simple, but so important. Peter got a little frustrated with Jesus because he kept asking, “Do you love me?” But Jesus was trying to make a point clear to Peter. If you love me, you have one very important thing to do in response: “Tend my sheep.”

That’s the most important part about loving Jesus. If we love him, we have to take care of our sisters and brothers, all the other people around us who are part of Jesus’ flock. It seems pretty simple, but we cannot forget the lesson. Pope Francis had a gathering last year with school students just like you, as they were

getting ready to start their summer vacation. He reminded them of Jesus' simple but powerful commandment. The Pope said: "You can begin to change the world with an open heart... That's how you can change the world. There is no magic wand, but there are little things we can learn to do every day" (2 June 2017).

So, think about the things you can start to do during the summer. Think about who around you could use your care and your love. Your siblings, maybe? Maybe your friends next door? Maybe a grandparent, or your mom or dad? Maybe cousins? Think about how much Jesus loves them, and then remember your job is to "tend his lambs." That's what we do when we love Jesus. Then when summer is over and you come back to school, you will already be prepared to tend the sheep here in school. Each of you can be there for each other. When people are mad, you can help them find peace. When you are hurt by someone, you can forgive them and grow in friendship. This is how we respond to our love for Jesus.

So, let me ask you all of you the most important question. Are you ready to hear the question? ... Okay, here it is: Do you love Jesus? ... Then feed his lambs. Do you love Jesus? ... Then tend his sheep. Do you love Jesus? ... Then feed his sheep. Love the people around you like Jesus loves them in all the little ways and even in the big ways. Keep your heart open to those around you in the love of Christ, and my friends, you will change the world for the better. Have a happy last few days of Easter, fruitful last weeks of school, and a wonderful summer. God bless you all.