

John 10:11-18

Jesus said: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.

'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd.

'The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.'

In the Gospel this Sunday, Jesus uses the image of the shepherd to describe himself and his relationship with us. At the time of Jesus, shepherds were a part of daily life for many people. When Jesus uses the image and symbol of the shepherd, the people to whom he was speaking would have understood what he was talking about immediately. But what does the image of Jesus the shepherd mean for us today? While sheep may all look the same to us, a shepherd knows each of them individually. When a shepherd calls a sheep, the sheep recognises the voice and responds. Just as the shepherd knows the sheep, the sheep knows and trusts the shepherd. The shepherd guides and protects the sheep. The sheep go where the shepherd leads them.

It is the voice of Jesus we hear as he calls each one of us by name. Jesus the Good Shepherd loves and leads us, searching for us when we stray. The depth of his love for us knows no limit. "I will lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:15). By knowing Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we are ultimately drawn into intimacy with the Father for "the Father and I are one."

- Today I pray: Jesus the Good Shepherd, open my ears to hear you. Open my heart to receive you. Strengthen my will to follow you.

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Year B

25th April 2021

Children of God Under the Staff of Christ



The Fourth Sunday of Easter is known as Vocations Sunday or Good Shepherd Sunday, and is marked as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The purpose of this day is to fulfil Jesus' instruction to "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:38). While appreciating all vocations, the Church concentrates her attention on raising up shepherds for God's people – vocations to priesthood and diaconate and to the religious life – while encouraging all who are discerning their vocation to pray more earnestly that they may hear and respond to God's call. This year Pope Francis has asked us to look to St. Joseph, our Blessed Virgin Mary's spouse and father of Jesus for his example in fulfilling his vocation by listening to the Spirit's guidance, offering his life in service and protection of his family, and his fidelity in living out his vocation for the rest of his life

Opening Prayer

*Almighty ever-living God, lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,
so that the humble flock may reach where the brave
Shepherd has gone before.*

Acts 4:8-12

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter said: 'Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he was healed, then I am glad to tell you all, and would indeed be glad to tell the whole people of Israel, that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man is able to stand up perfectly healthy, here in your presence, today. This is the stone rejected by you the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone. For of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

The apostles Peter and John had healed a crippled man at the gate of the temple and preached to the people in Jerusalem about Jesus. While they were speaking to the people, the Jewish leaders came and arrested them for preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead. Today's reading recounts Peter's speech at their trial. His message was focused on the identity of Jesus, explaining that it was by the power of Jesus the crippled man was healed and saved. Despite being rejected by the Jewish leaders, Jesus is the cornerstone of the New Temple of the people of God, the Church. Peter proclaims that Jesus "is the only one by which we can be saved." This message is central to our faith: God sent Jesus to save us from sin and He is the only means by which we can be saved. Having been imprisoned for the night may not look like an opportunity, but in fact it provides Peter the perfect opening to speak out about the power of Jesus who, though crucified, is now alive for ever. Just as Jesus said would happen, Peter knows that he is given the words to say when asked to bear witness to the truth.

- How do I in my daily life bear witness and profess my faith in the risen Jesus?

Psalm 117(118):1,8-9,21-23,26,28-29

*The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.
Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in men;
it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.*

*I will thank you for you have answered and you are my saviour.
The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.
This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes.
Blessed in the name of the Lord is he who comes.
We bless you from the house of the Lord;
You are my God, I thank you. My God, I praise you.
Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; For His love has no end.*

1 John 3:1-2

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

John, in the Second Reading, describes a vision of God, as Lamb, shepherding the saved from every nation and he reveals (in the Gospel) the manner of that shepherding – with a great and tender care. That we are God's children is not just a beautiful thought but the deepest reality, because we are united with Jesus, God's beloved Son. Only when we see God will we be able to understand this.

- How can I today open my life to the tender nurturing care of the Good Shepherd?

Alleluia, alleluia! *I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my own sheep and my own know me. Alleluia!*

(Gospel overleaf)

Prayer over the Offerings

Grant, we pray, O Lord, that we may always find delight in these paschal mysteries, so that the renewal constantly at work within us may be the cause of our unending joy.

Prayer after Communion

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd, and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures the sheep you have redeemed by the Precious Blood of your Son.