

John 10:27-30

Jesus said: 'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me. The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone, and no one can steal from the Father. The Father and I are one.'

It is also said that the sheep heed the Shepherd, because they know his voice. Is it true that we recognize Christ's call and respond to it? In one sense it must be, for he has said so; yet much in me qualifies the statement. Actually I respond much more readily to the call of 'the other'; I neither really understand Christ's summons nor follow it. Therefore, in order that I may hear, he must not only speak, but also open my ears to his voice. Part of me, the profoundest part, listens to it, but superficial, loud contradiction often overpowers it. The opponents with whom God must struggle in order to win us are not primarily 'the others,' but ourselves; we bar his way. The wolf who puts the hireling to flight is not outside; he is also within. We are the arch-enemy of our own salvation, and the Shepherd must fight first of all with us – for us.

(Romano Guardini, *The Lord*)

***The Lord is my Shepherd,
there is nothing I shall want.***

Psalm 23

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Year C

8th May 2022

I give eternal life to the sheep that belong to me



Jesus is revealed in today's Gospel as the Good Shepherd. He will go and search for the lost straying sheep, because he is one with the Father, and the Father is love. Jesus can act in no other way. This love is the reason why John, in our 2nd reading, tells us that the Lamb has become the Shepherd. The Lamb of God who came amongst us to offer his life for us; who through suffering and death has become the means to eternal life. The Lamb has turned our death, which was a barrier to God, into a gateway leading to heaven; and as such, he has truly become our Leader, our Shepherd: "*I will give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me.*"

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 13:14,43-52

Paul and Barnabas carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the Sabbath and took their seats.

When the meeting broke up many Jews and devout converts joined Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them.

The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly. 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'

It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.

But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

An important development takes place in the proclamation of the Gospel. Paul and Barnabas, rejected by the Jewish Community, begin to preach in Antioch to the pagans. They have truly become a 'light for all nations'.

Psalm 99(100):1-3,5

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing for joy.

Know that he, the Lord, is God. He made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Indeed, how good is the Lord, eternal his merciful love. He is faithful from age to age.

Apocalypse 7:9,14-17

I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. One of the elders said, 'These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

The above vision describes the scene leading up to the final destruction of the world which follows the opening of the Seventh Seal. It tells of the gathering of the elect, those who have suffered persecution and are now gathered around the throne of God, enjoying his life. Jesus is put before us as the true shepherd, because he is also the Lamb who was slain. He will lead his own to the springs of living water.

*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.