

"I Am the Good Shepherd"

Reading 1: Act 4: 8 – 12
 Reading 2: 1 John 3: 1 – 2

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 117: 1,8-9,21-23,26,28-29
 Gospel Reading : John: 10: 11 – 18

Gospel Reading:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father."

Meditation: Do you know the peace and security of the Good Shepherd who watches over his own? The Old Testament often speaks of God as shepherd of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: *He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms* (Isaiah 40:11). Jesus says he is the *Good Shepherd* who will risk his life to seek out and save the stray sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4). He is the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25).

Jesus is the Good Shepherd and Guardian of our souls

Jesus made three promises to his followers. He promised them everlasting life. If they accept him and follow him, they will have the life of God in them. Jesus also promised them a life that would know no end. Death would not be the end but the beginning; they would know the glory of indestructible life. Jesus promised a life that was secure. Jesus said that nothing would snatch them out of his hand, not even sorrow and death, since he is everlasting life itself. Our lives are safe in his hands.

Do you listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd who calls you to himself?

The words which Jesus spoke upset many of the Jewish leaders. How could he speak with the same authority which God spoke and claim to be equal with God? He must either be insane or divine. Unfortunately some thought he was mad even though he cured a man who was blind from birth. We are faced with the same choice. Either Jesus is who he claims to be - the Son of God and Saviour of the world - or the world's greatest deluder! We cannot be indifferent to his claim. For those who accept him as Lord and Saviour he offers the peace and security of unending life and joy with God. Do you know the peace and security of a life fully submitted to Christ?

"He shows in what manner a shepherd may be proved good; and He teaches that he must be prepared to give up his life fighting in defence of his sheep, which was fulfilled in Christ. For man has departed from the love of God, and fallen into sin, and because of this was, I say, excluded from the divine abode of paradise, and when he was weakened by that disaster, he yielded to the devil tempting him to sin, and death following that sin he became the prey of fierce and ravenous wolves. But after Christ was announced as the True Shepherd of all men, *He laid down his life for us* (1 John 3:16), fighting for us against that pack of inhuman beasts.

"He bore the Cross for us, that by His own death he might destroy death. He was condemned for us, that He might deliver all of us from the sentence of punishment: the tyranny of sin being overthrown by our faith: fastening to the Cross the decree that stood against us, as it is written (Colossians 2:14). Therefore as the father of sin had as it were shut up the sheep in hell, giving them to death to feed on, as it is written in the psalms (Ps. Xlviii.16), He died for us as truly Good, and truly our Shepherd, so that the dark shadow of death driven away He might join us to the company of the blessed in heaven; and in exchange for abodes that lie far in the depths of the pit, and in the hidden places of the sea, grant us mansions in His Father's House above. Because of this he says to us in another place: *Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom* (Luke 12:32)."

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. Do you listen attentively to the voice of the Good Shepherd and obey his word? Please explain how?
2. How have you experienced the love of the Jesus the Shepherd in your life and listen, and respond, to his voice?
3. How can you help build true unity in your parish and among Christians to be united?

"Lord Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd who keeps watch over our lives. May I be ever attentive to your voice and submit fully to your wise rule for my life. Draw me near to you that I may always find peace and joy in your presence."