

4th Sunday of Easter

Jesus, our good shepherd, invites each one of us to know and to follow him more closely. Today is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, on which we pray especially for vocations to the priestly, the religious and the consecrated life.

Acts 4:8-12

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter discovers his gift of healing. Only by the name of Jesus, he declares, can any of us be saved.

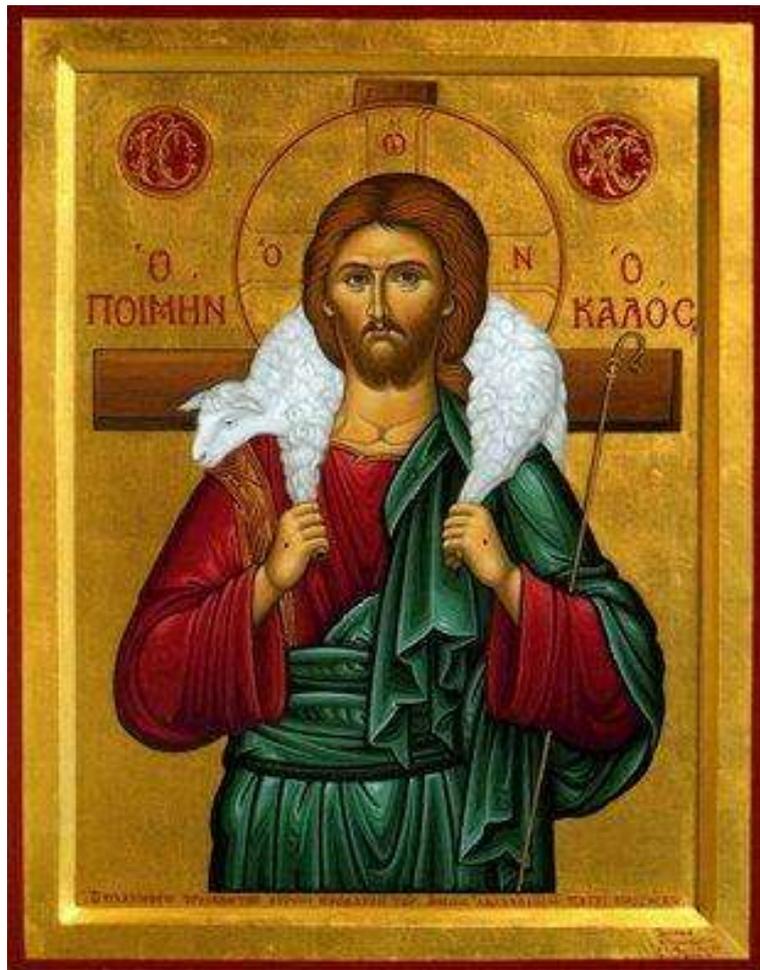
1 John 3:1-2

Whatever the future may hold, we have the assurance of being God's beloved children. Our vocation is to grow in the Father's likeness.

John 10:11-18

Like a good shepherd, Jesus is dedicated to our care and protection. He willingly laid down his life for the flock, as well as for others not yet in his fold.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD



Reflection

Among the early Christians, when there was conflict, when disputes arose between different groups, leaders came forward, but they still felt the need to remember that in the community of Jesus, there is only one Shepherd, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Not just another shepherd, but “the real deal”, the authentic, the true shepherd, the model for everyone to follow, the genuine article.

This beautiful image of Jesus as **The Good Shepherd** is really a call to conversion. It’s also directed at anyone who can claim in any way the title of “shepherd” in the community.

The shepherd who resembles Jesus is a person who thinks only of the sheep; he doesn’t run away when there are problems; he doesn’t abandon the sheep. Quite the opposite, he stays with them; he protects them from harm; he does everything he can for them, even laying his life on the line for their sake.

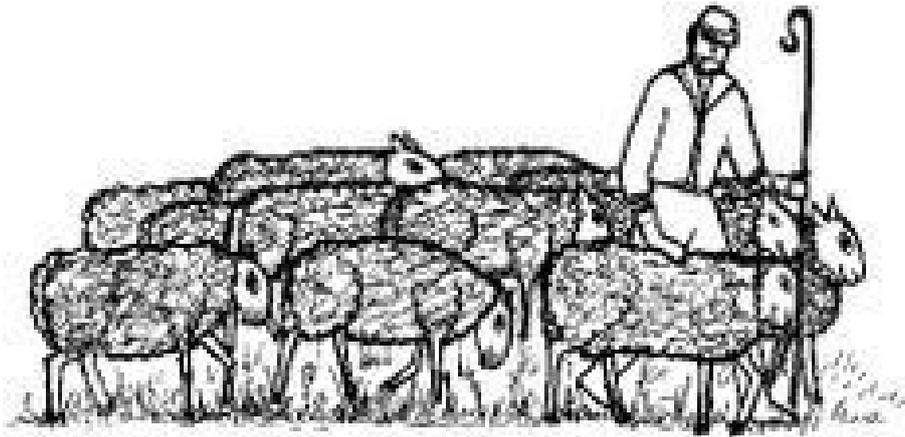
At the same time, this image is a call to fraternity among everyone; a plea for everybody to come together. The good shepherd knows his sheep and the sheep know him. Only through this strong closeness, this mutual familiarity and understanding, this union of hearts, does the good shepherd share his life with his sheep.

We’ve got to move toward this coming together and knowing one another in our Parish today. We’re in difficult times for the faith; we’ve got to join forces as never before; we’ve got to engage together in a search for principles based on the Gospels. That’s the only way we can get guidelines for action, so that we can know in what direction we’ve got to move, out of lockdown, towards the future.

We’ve got to create in our Parish, an atmosphere of mutual listening and dialogue.

This isn’t always there in the wider Church today: there are sometimes disputes between bishops and theologians, between theologians of different schools of thought, between different kinds of movements and groups of people, and between factions and “blocs” of different kinds.

Only believers filled with the Spirit of the Good Shepherd can help us to create the atmosphere of familiarity, mutual listening, and respect and humble dialogue which we so badly need.



The Fourth Sunday of Easter is called Good Shepherd Sunday. This day is also designated as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, encouraging us all to pray for vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. Pope Benedict XVI invited all the faithful to “cultivate an intimate relationship with Christ, Master and Shepherd of His people, imitating Mary who guarded the divine mysteries in her heart and contemplated them assiduously.” The Church's holiness depends essentially on our union with Christ and our openness to the mystery of grace at work in the hearts of us all.

GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

S	R	L	F	O	W	O	R	D	S	GOOD	SHEPHERD	SHEEP	WOLF
N	P	E	E	H	S	C	E	S	C	VOICE	ABANDONS	FATHER	LEAD
O	D	P	W	D	I	R	H	D	A	FLOCK	WILL	POWER	COMMAND
D	E	E	A	O	I	E	T	N	T				
N	A	E	V	H	P	F	A	A	T				
A	L	S	C	H	F	I	F	M	R				
B	A	L	E	I	F	L	G	M	E				
A	T	R	I	O	O	D	O	O	G				
R	D	L	L	W	I	V	O	C	S				
S	R	E	T	T	A	C	S	D	K				



By Filipo Garcia de Oliveira

MAY IS MARY'S MONTH

The Saturday after Good Shepherd Sunday we begin the month of May, with its profusion of blossoms. May was adopted by the Church in the eighteenth century as a celebration of the flowering of Mary's spirituality.

In Isaiah's prophecy of the Virgin birth of the Messiah, the figure of the Blossoming Rod, or Root of Jesse, the flower symbolism of Mary was extended by the Church Fathers, and, in the liturgy, by applying to her the flower figures of the Biblical books of Canticles, Wisdom, Proverbs and Sirach. In the medieval period, the rose was adopted as the flower symbol of the Virgin Birth, as expressed in Dante's phrase,

'The Rose wherein the Divine Word was made flesh,'

and depicted in the rose windows of the great gothic cathedrals, from which came the Christmas carol, 'Lo, How a Rose 'ere Blooming.' Also, with the spread of the Franciscan love of nature, the rose of the fields, waysides and gardens, came to be seen as symbols of Mary.

MAY IS MARY'S MONTH

By Gerard Manley Hopkins
(Born in Stratford 28 July 1844)

May is Mary's month, and I
Muse at that and wonder why:
Her feasts follow reason,
Dated due to season—

Candlemas, Lady Day;
But the Lady Month, May,
Why fasten that upon her,
With a feasting in her honour?

Is it only its being brighter
Than the most are must delight her?
Is it opportunist
And flowers finds soonest?

Ask of her, the mighty mother:
Her reply puts this other
Question: What is Spring?—
Growth in every thing—

Flesh and fleece, fur and feather,
Grass and greenworld all together;
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
Throstle above her nested

Cluster of bugle blue eggs thin
Forms and warms the life within;
And bird and blossom swell
In sod or sheath or shell.

All things rising, all things sizing
Mary sees, sympathising
With that world of good,
Nature's motherhood.

Their magnifying of each its kind
With delight calls to mind
How she did in her stored
Magnify the Lord.

Well but there was more than this:

Spring's universal bliss
Much, had much to say
To offering Mary May.

When drop-of-blood-and-foam-dapple

Bloom lights the orchard-apple
And thicket and thorp are merry
With silver-surfed cherry

And azuring-over greybell makes
Wood banks and brakes wash wet like lakes

And magic cuckoocall
Caps, clears, and clinches all—

This ecstasy all through mothering earth

Tells Mary her mirth till Christ's birth
To remember and exultation
In God who was her salvation.