



## Good Shepherd Sunday – May 3, 2020

The image of the Good Shepherd is something that the Catholic church has incorporated so thoroughly that it is probably overlooked and taken for granted. Take for example the image on the front of our Catechism. It is none other than the image of shepherd and his sheep. The sheep hear the voice or the flute of the shepherd and follow only him. We can also look to our bishop and what we call the priest in charge of our parish. We call them pastor from the same word the Bible uses for shepherd and the Bishop himself walks with a shepherd's staff which we call a crozier. The priest and the Bishop are meant to be the image of the Good Shepherd to the sheep, leading them along the path, calling them back when they have gone astray and protecting them from the enemy. Not only are the priests and bishops called to be shepherds, but we are meant to imitate Christ to the flock that is in our care as well. We are called to be guardians of their souls. And at the same time we are asked to be sheep, to spend time hearing the voice of the shepherd and to follow Him. The authors of all four scriptures for this Sunday fill out these images for us.



### Reading 1 [ACTS 2:14A, 36-41](#)

This reading begins by explaining that it comes from the most famous Pentecost speech from St. Peter. Taking a section from a couple verses earlier is commonly done in Mass readings to give the reader some context. We see St. Peter “walking in front” of his sheep in this passage from Acts. He is leading them with courage. We see later in the passage that there were at least three thousand present. Keep in mind that following these teachings wasn't exactly legal at the time. Peter goes to jail for preaching the Gospel, but because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, he is filled with courage. The same Peter that denied Jesus three times is now speaking to total strangers to tell them that Jesus was indeed the Lord and Christ and that we ought to repent and be baptized. Peter is depicted as a shepherd in this passage because he is teaching the truth boldly and courageously.

Further reading: [From St. John Chrysostom](#).

## Diving Deeper:

1. Acts 2:36 Why does Peter make a distinction that Jesus was both Lord and Christ? (See Philippians 2:6-11, Daniel 7:13-14 and John 1:41) <sup>1</sup>
2. In what way can I be more courageous, like St. Peter, with the flock that is under my care? (See CCC 900-901)

## Responsorial Psalm 23

This is probably the most well-known of all the Psalms, but because of that it can be glossed over because we can become too familiar with it. Some of you might even have it memorized. I invite you to read it again today with the image to the right in your head.

Go to this link for a great story about Psalm 23 from Matthew Kelly  
<https://youtu.be/nzttWgbRVk0?t=1894>



## Diving Deeper:

1. "I will give you shepherds after my own heart" (Jer. 3:15). In these words from the prophet Jeremiah, God promises his people that he will never leave them without shepherds to gather them together and guide them: "I will set shepherds over them [my sheep] who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed (Jer. 23:4). Do I trust this passage? Do I trust the Lord? One aspect of sheep is their radical trust. Yes, it might be because they are dumb animals, but before you answer the questions above, ask yourself if you are ok being sheep? Are you ok with letting the Lord and His Shepherd's lead?
2. Listen to the video clip from Matthew Kelly. Do you know the shepherd's voice? How can you this week prepare a space in your heart to get to know Him more?

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<sup>1</sup> Jesus is Lord because He is the King of Kings and has dominion over all. The Lord in that time would be commonly known as the King or ruler, not only of a larger regional group of people, but in each household. Yet, He is not simply a political leader, Jesus is the Christ, He is the Anointed One or the Messiah. Messiah and Christ are used interchangeably in different bibles. The last time these two phrases were used with the same person was King David, the king and anointed one. Therefore, they are cut to the heart because they didn't put to death a common criminal. Jesus was the Messiah, the one they were all waiting for.

## Reading 2 [1 Peter 2:20B-25](#)

Please watch this video for Fr. Erickson's reflections on this passage. <https://youtu.be/5v8yl4GEzJA>

The author is writing to an audience that is living in a secular and hostile environment to the Christian values. Within this culture the Christians were constantly afflicted by the government and everything around them for doing the good that Jesus proclaimed in the Gospels. St. Peter reminds them not only to not be pulled away from the Good News, but to also bear this burden patiently.

### Diving Deeper:

1. In our own culture we might also feel this burden of affliction for doing what Jesus is asking and what our Shepherds are asking. We might be tempted to turn away because it is easier or to become impatient with those causing the burden. Being unjustly accused can often be the hardest thing to bear, yet this is exactly what Jesus did for the forgiveness of our sins. What will you do to remind yourself of this the next time you want to lash out when you are wrongly accused or when living out your Catholic life is persecuted?
2. Take a minute to think about the things that we are bearing today. Ask the Lord if they are from Him or something that we need to let go of in order to bear the cross that the Lord has indeed ask me to carry. Make your list below and share them with the Lord and your small group if you are meeting with them at this time.

## Gospel according to [John 10:1-10](#)

In this passage Jesus uses a teaching tool known as a parable. A parable normally seeks to illustrate one truth at a time through the medium of a story. Although Jesus uses imagery that the reader will understand, we can still find meaning in them if we understand the historical context in which Jesus, the author, and the reader were living. Because there aren't many shepherds in modern day Minnesota, we can either try to think of a similar example that will help us understand or we can learn a little more about what the story would have meant for the audience at the time.

The best modern example is a dairy farmer. Unlike a cattle farmer, the dairy farmer typically keeps cows for a much longer time period, gets to know the cows and may even give them names. Cows can also learn the voice of the farmer because they have heard it for several years. A Palestinian shepherd would be with his sheep not for the meat, but for the wool. Raising sheep for wool takes longer and therefore the shepherd knew his sheep and they were accustomed to their shepherd. In this gospel, Jesus uses two different parables with similar settings to illustrate a truth. The Pharisees didn't understand at first, so the Lord used another example that would provide clarity. Some commentators think this might be because Jesus is using this example because they are the thieves that do not care for the souls of their flock and not only don't know their names, but they even lead them astray. One other

possibility is simply that sin clouded their minds. It is easy to judge the Pharisees for not understanding the first example and think, “What is their problem? Why are they so dense to not understand this children’s parable?” But, then we only need to look in the mirror and remember the times that we too haven’t understood or our own sin clouded our thoughts and in a moment of clarity, only years later, we can see how silly we were. So, don’t be quick to judge, but be quick to look in the mirror and ask for the Lord’s grace.

The last line of this passage is a message of rejoicing and hope. This Good Shepherd doesn’t come to lord His dominion over us, but to give us life in abundance. This is far from the prosperity gospel that Fr. Erickson talked about. This abundance, like our hope, is not in this world. We harken back to Psalm 23 as we rest in the shepherd’s arms and say, “I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.” This is the abundant life!

### **Diving Deeper:**

1. Because Jesus’ words are always full of meaning and never arbitrary, what are two of the many possible points He is trying to make? <sup>2</sup>
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. A life of prayer and discernment requires you to take what you learn from the gospel and practice it in your life. Understanding that it takes time to know the voice of the shepherd, what change will you make this week to facilitate this relationship?

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240159.htm> 1. The thief sneaks around and seeks to deceive. The shepherd comes openly through the gate with nothing to hide. 2. The shepherd knows his sheep. 3. The shepherd leads by walking in front. 4. The shepherd doesn’t seek to deprive the sheep, but seeks to give life abundantly. 5. The pharisees don’t understand because they have oppressed the people and forgotten that they exist as a shepherd for the sake of the sheep and not for themselves. Many more can be found in the homily of St. John Chrysostom linked above.