



Fourth Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

Gospel Reading: John 10:11-18
I Am The Good Shepherd

The fourth Sunday of Easter is also called Good Shepherd Sunday. In each of the three lectionary cycles, our Gospel is taken from the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John. This chapter of John's Gospel follows Jesus' healing of the man born blind and the rejection of this miracle by the Jewish leaders who question Jesus' authority to heal. Jesus responds to this challenge by calling himself the Good Shepherd.

In the gospel reading we hear proclaimed today, Jesus describes his relationship with his followers as similar to the relationship between a good shepherd and his sheep. As would a good shepherd will risk and lay down his life, in order to protect his sheep, Jesus willingly sacrifices himself for the sake of his sheep. The concern of a good shepherd for his sheep is part of the shepherd's job. Jesus says, however, that the actions of the good shepherd are based upon the relationship that develops between the shepherd and the sheep. This is at the heart of the difference between the good shepherd and the hired shepherd. The good shepherd knows the sheep and therefore acts out of love.

- What are some of the images which help you grasp that sense of God's personal love for you? Do you see yourself as a sheep in God's flock? Or as a child in God's Family?
- Do you willingly contribute to the family good when asked?
- How might the belief that you are an unconditionally loved child of God impact your prayer and the way you relate to Jesus?
- Why do you think the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is so popular with people?
- What other image(s) of Jesus do you like?
- How has Jesus shepherded you?
- Have you ever been led astray or attacked by wolves?
- How do you listen for Jesus' voice?
- Most of us don't know what it's like to herd sheep. If Jesus were speaking today, what metaphors might he use?