

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

Fourth Sunday of Easter Gospel Word
John 10:1-10

If we lived in first century Palestine, we would know a lot about the comings and goings of sheep. Sheep provided jobs for shepherds, and food and clothing for the masses. It's no surprise that Jesus used examples from the world of sheep to help people understand more about God's ways. In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus points out that good sheep herding requires the sheep and shepherd to know each other well. The shepherd knows each of his sheep by name, and they each recognize his voice. It's all very "personal." To outsiders, most sheep look pretty much alike. To a good shepherd, each one is recognized and treasured as unique. A good shepherd truly cares about his sheep. He ushers them to an opening or gate, through which they can pass to a more abundant life of nurture and nourishment. Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He is the one who calls us and ushers us into places of greater nourishment and a nurtured life.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Today's Gospel image of "the Good Shepherd" is familiar to us. It goes back to the Psalms: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1). It is sometimes used by the Church to describe good pastoral practice. But this Gospel is not just about "what to do," or "how to best lead the church." We might also think about it as being about our own Christian lives and the kind of interpersonal relationships that most enhance life, our lives—and the lives of those around us!

The spiritual life of each person, young or old, is something that's alive. It knows moments of growth and decay, good times and not so good times. Our spiritual life is nurtured by our relationship with God, with others and yes, even with ourselves! So the question is: What is my basic attitude as a shepherd toward others and myself? Am I a loving, sensitive and caring shepherd who listens and gets to know, accept and respect myself, and others? Am I indifferent, inconsiderate or negligent of these relationships? Do I affirm my own uniqueness (quirks and even idiosyncrasies)? Do I respect and seek to understand the uniqueness of others to better serve them? Maybe I am somewhere in the middle. Maybe it depends on what day I am asked, or what mood I'm in. Maybe it depends on which relationship I am thinking about. Putting aside the maybes, take a few minutes to compare yourself to the Good Shepherd in the Gospel, and think about what you need to continue doing, or stop doing, to enhance your spiritual life and the spiritual lives of others.

Prayer

Loving Father: You know me inside and out. You call me by name. I am grateful. Thank you. Amen.