



John 10:11-18 11

Jesus said: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. 12 The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; 13 this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. 16 And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd. 17 The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.'

Other readings: Acts 4:8-12 Psalm 117 (118) 1 John 3:1-2

The description of Jesus as a shepherd adopts an image which is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures. The shepherds of Palestine provided for their sheep in so many varied ways that the image was used of the loving care of God for the people. In the Fourth Gospel the same image is elaborated in new ways. Jesus is the good shepherd who gives his very life for his sheep. He contrasts his commitment to the sheep with the behaviour of the hired ones who flee at the first hint of danger. Jesus was fearless in the face of death in order to save his sheep. Jesus knows the sheep. His knowledge of them, his familiarity with them as he enfolds them in his loving care, reflects the close relationship between the Father and the Son. The image of the shepherd is developed here with an extraordinary richness. He will bring new members into his fold. The flock of Jesus Christ is not composed only of those who were first called. The mission of the followers of Jesus is limited by no boundaries of race, nation or origin. The unity of all the children of God is the goal of his coming and of his saving death and resurrection. Our passage ends with a focus on the Lord's free and generous self-giving. In doing the Father's will he shows the power of his love, which is fully displayed in his rising to new life. The Good Shepherd is risen indeed, and shares his new life with us.

Do I value my place in the flock of the good shepherd?

Do I do what I can to attract others to receive new life from the Risen Lord?

Let us pray for all pastors of the Church that they may truly imitate the Good Shepherd.

Let us pray that all those called to priesthood may respond with courage and generosity.