

Scripture Reflection by Father Dave

April 25, 2021

4th Sunday of Easter - Over the last fifty years or so Israel has invested in large-scale irrigation systems that have helped to make parts of the desert into farmland. However, the greater bulk of the country is still very harsh and unforgiving. It is in these semi-desert areas that one can often come across a young shepherd with a small flock of sheep. There are no fields rich in green grasses here. An untrained eye may occasionally spot a small stream that disappears within a few feet of its tiny source. In this forbidding environment the shepherd and his sheep eke out their existence. After a while, one also notices that there are no sheep dogs. The shepherd doesn't have a vast flock to steer from place to place. He has only a small flock that he leads from one grazing ground to the next. The shepherd will strike off in the direction of food and simply call to his sheep. Because the sheep trust in him for their very lives they follow him and find nourishment and safety.

In the time of Jesus things were not very different from the shepherds in Israel today. The sheep depended completely upon the shepherd for their protection and for food. The shepherd and his whole family were dependent upon the sheep for their economic security and the supply of the basic essentials for life. They could not afford to let someone who does not care for the sheep, or for them, look after the flock – the sheep and the shepherd were bound together for survival.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees and the religious leaders of Israel. In the description of the good shepherd and the hired hand He is describing the flaws in their understanding of leadership. The Pharisees and the scribes behave as though they are temporary shepherds hired from an employment agency – they will fulfill their duties but they will not have any lasting commitment to the people for whom they are responsible. When the duties become too burdensome or dangerous they will abandon their post and their flock. In contrast with the Pharisees, the Good Shepherd, Jesus Himself, is faithful and will offer up His own life for the sake of the sheep. Those who hear His voice know that He is trustworthy and that He will lead them to safety and nourishment. Just as God has been the shepherd of Israel from generation to generation Jesus now assumes this role for the new Israel. This is a costly road for Jesus; He will lead His flock to Calvary and through death to the glory of Resurrection. We are now part of this flock and we also will travel the same road – through death to the glory of Resurrection.

As Baptized disciples of Jesus, each of us is entrusted with the care of shepherding one another. Sometimes it will be easy, other times - not. At all times we are to shepherd with gentleness yet firmness. Let us pray that,

following the Good Shepherd's example, we strive to assist one another onto the straight and narrow – encouraging, mending hurts, faithful and loving – to the everlasting Kingdom.



Saints for this week –

April 25 – St Mark – the author of the second Gospel was a member of the early Christian community at Jerusalem. St Paul and St Barnabas, his cousin, took him on their first missionary journey. When they reached Cyprus, however, Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. Mark would in time become Paul's trusted companion at Rome, during one of Paul's imprisonments. He was also an associate of Peter. Mark is depicted in art as a winged lion, probably suggested by the description in his Gospel of John the Baptist as "a voice crying in the desert."

May 1 – St Joseph the Worker – On May 1, 1955 then Pope Pius XII addressed the Catholic Association of Italian Workers and declared that this day would be known as the feast day of St Joseph the Worker. In the Communist bloc, May 1 is celebrated as May Day, which glorifies the relationship between the worker and the socialist state. It is obvious that the Church was very concerned with this, and wanted to demonstrate to its faithful that it was equally concerned about the plight of the working man and woman. Joseph, a carpenter, taught his trade to his Son, Jesus, and provided for his family. It is especially important to remember this human element when contemplating the lives of both St Joseph and the Holy Family.

Scripture Reflection by Father Rody
April 25, 2021 JN 10, 11-18

11 I am the good shepherd...

After the Easter Sunday, Christ was busy appearing to His disciples and telling them 'When I was still with you, I told you several times that this has to happen to the Son of Man as stated in the law of Moses and the prophets.' Gradually they started opening themselves up to the scriptures.

This Sunday, our Lord Jesus Christ is presenting Himself to us as the Good Shepherd who is willing to lay down His life just for us... for our own welfare... for our own well-being. I wish to lead you to reflect on the two instances wherein this concept of Good Shepherd has been realized by way of participation of our own parents.

FIRST INSTANCE...Once a mother is in the delivery room, it is said that her one foot is already in the grave...*but but but* she decided it so to place her one foot in the grave. Why? Because she wanted to see her baby experience how beautiful life is...and for the mother who is agonizing from excruciating pain, the first cry of her baby really painted a smile on her face which is beyond words to describe. *See, one foot in the grave plus the first cry of the baby = life (that's the equation of life)*. Life not only for both (mother-baby) but for the whole family.

SECOND INSTANCE...it did not end with giving birth. In fact, that is only the first step to a long journey of being a Good Shepherd. In the wee hours of the morning, they needed to wake up just to make you a milk or change your diapers-good gracious they were hard up getting that sound sleep again. Parents wanted to buy something for themselves but they said 'Oh no not this time, let us just save the money for the first

birthday of our baby.' Delay of gratification just because of you-their baby...they always thought what's the best for you.

Now, on the side of God...the first instance is-the Only Begotten Son was in the grave-obedient to the will of the Father even to death itself...*the second instance is*-don't you worry My Father will send another Advocate who will be with you until the end of time-the Holy Spirit. Why? Because just as our parents on both instances wanted us to enjoy life... *same true with God, He wanted us to have life not simply life but life in abundance* (Jn. 10,10).

