

The Good Shepherd!

Have you ever met a shepherd? Perhaps on a visit to a local farm you have met a shepherd and they were able to tell you all about their work. You may also help to look after animals at home and so you know that, generally they make you happy. But to look after them properly can be hard work, exercising, cleaning, feeding, going to the Vet – it all takes time and money. But I guess we would say that it is worth it in the end. In this Sunday's story from the Gospel of St. John Jesus talks about sheep and shepherds and describes himself as **the** Good Shepherd. Not **a** Good Shepherd, as in one among other good shepherds but the shepherd who is above all others who have the same title. Why?

Jesus tells us that people can be a little bit like sheep. There are times when we need looking after just like sheep need a shepherd. We need to know that we are liked and loved. This is a need that all of us have. So, when you are in the playground or the park, if you are the one that makes sure everyone is included you are being a good shepherd. You are making sure that other children are feeling accepted, valued, liked and loved. That is very important for their health and well-being and for yours. Being a good shepherd makes you feel good. At the moment, we may not be able to do that in a physical way because of the virus, but there might be other ways to do it and we will begin to get back to normal when the Government give us permission. Not too long to wait, I hope, but maybe a little bit longer yet. When your parents and family look after you each day they are being good shepherds to you and the same with teachers and other staff at school.

How do we know how to be good shepherds? We follow the example of other good shepherds and together with them we follow the example of Jesus. There is a story in the Bible where Jesus is giving a talk and he says this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people".¹ In other words, Jesus has come to help us all and especially those who have problems who need help and to help us all get to heaven when that time comes. This is why, he has the title of **the** good shepherd who not only helps us but also helps us to help others.

You may hear that Bishops, Priests and Deacons are also called shepherds. That is because they help and encourage us to be like Jesus. They help us to know and understand Jesus and through prayer to be close to him. Special moments of prayer are the Sacraments and through baptism and holy communion Jesus shares his life, the life of the good shepherd, with us. We can

¹ Luke 4:16-21

thank Jesus this Sunday for being **the** good shepherd and think of the ways in which we can be good shepherds like him!

God bless,

Canon David