Fourth Sunday of Easter (B)

Gospel text (*Jn* 10:11-18): Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (…)”.

John 10: background and fulfillment of the image of "God as Shepherd"

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
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Today, the image of the "Shepherd" introduces the mission of Jesus. Already in the ancient Near East, the king was considered as the "shepherd" instituted by God. In the Old Testament, God Himself appears as Shepherd of Israel (cf. Ps 23: "The Lord is my shepherd"). The image of "God as shepherd" is more developed in chapters 34-37 of Ezekiel: there, it is promised that God Himself will seek out for his sheep and will care them.

The belated Old Testament prophecies take a new turn, leading directly to the mystery of Jesus Christ. Mathew recounts that Jesus, after the Last Supper, predicted to his disciples what was foretold in Zachariah 13:7, «I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed». The later prophets of Israel glimpse, without being able to explain it any better, the figure of the Redeemer who suffers and dies, the shepherd who becomes the lamb.

—John concludes his account of the crucifixion with a reference to Zachariah 12:10: «They will look upon him whom they have pierced». It is now clear: the murdered one and the Savior is Jesus Christ, the Crucified one.