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. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father.”

“I am the good shepherd”

Mons. José Ángel SAIZ Meneses, Archbishop of Seville
(Sevilla, Spain)

Today we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday. First and foremost, the attitude of the sheep must be to listen to the shepherd’s voice and follow him. To listen carefully, to be docile to his word, to follow him with a decision that engages the whole existence: understanding, heart, all strength and all action, following in His footsteps.

For his part, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows his sheep and gives them eternal life, in such a way that they will never be lost and, furthermore, no one will take them from his hand. Christ is the true Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep (cf. Jn 10:11), for us, sacrificing himself on the cross. He knows His sheep and His sheep know Him, just as the Father knows Him and He knows the Father. It is not about a superficial and external knowledge, nor just an intellectual knowledge. It is about a deep personal relationship, an integral knowledge of the heart, which ends up becoming friendship, because this is the logical consequence of a relationship between one who loves and one who is loved; in whom you know you can fully trust.

It is God the Father who has entrusted him with the care of his sheep. Everything is the fruit of the love of God the Father given to his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus fulfills the mission that his Father has entrusted to

him, which is the care of his sheep, with a fidelity that will not allow anyone to take them from his hand, with a love that leads him to give his life for them, in communion with the Father because "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10:30).

This is precisely where the source of our hope lies: in Christ the Good Shepherd whom we want to follow and whose voice we listen to for we know that eternal life is found only in Him. Here we find strength in the face of life's difficulties, we who are a weak flock and who are subjected to various tribulations.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Our High priest is Christ Jesus, our sacrifice is his precious body which he immolated on the altar of the cross for the salvation of all men. Christ Jesus our Savior.” (Saint John Fisher)

- “I am the good shepherd, Jesus says, I know my own and my own know me. How marvelous this knowledge is! "I know... and they know”.” (Saint John Paul II)

- “This sacrifice of Christ is unique; it completes and surpasses all other sacrifices. First, it is a gift from God the Father himself, for the Father handed his Son over to sinners in order to reconcile us with himself. At the same time it is the offering of the Son of God made man, who in freedom (...) offered in reparation for our disobedience.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 614)

Other comments

«I am the good shepherd»

Fr. Josep VALL i Mundó
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Jesus tells us: «I am the good shepherd» (Jn 10:11). St. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on this assertion, writes that «it is evident the title of “good shepherd” suits Christ for, as the shepherd feeds the flock in the pasture, so Christ feeds the faithful with a spiritual food: his own body and blood». It all started with the Incarnation and Jesus, throughout his earthly life, fully accomplished it to its end through his redeeming death in the Cross and his resurrection. After it, He entrusted the shepherding of the people of God to Peter, to the Apostles and to the Church, till the end of time.

Through his shepherds, Christ teaches his Word, He gives out his grace with the Sacraments and leads the flock towards the Kingdom: He gives himself as food in the Sacrament of the Eucharist; He imparts the Word of God and his Magistery, and solicitously guides his People. Jesus provides his Church with

shepherds who can follow His heart, that is, men who, symbolising Jesus through the sacrament of Holy Orders, are willing to give their life for their sheep, with pastoral charity, with a humble spirit of service, and with clemency, patience and fortitude. St. Augustine frequently spoke of this engaging responsibility of the shepherd: «To be honoured as a shepherd worries me (...) what I am for you terrifies me, what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian».

And each one of us, Christians, we work by helping these shepherds, praying for them, loving them and obeying them. We are also shepherds for our brothers, providing them with the grace and the doctrine we have received, sharing their concern and joy, and helping everybody with all our heart. We devote ourselves to those around us whether in our family, or in our social and professional world, quite willing to offer our life for them all with the same spirit of Christ, who came to this world «not for other people to serve him. The Son of Man came to serve other people» (Mt 20:28).