Monday 4th (A) of Easter

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”

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Today, Jesus tells us: “I am the good shepherd” (Jn 10:11). When Saint Thomas Aquinas comments on this avowal, he writes “it is evident that the name of ‘shepherd’ suits Christ, for just as the shepherd leads his fold to the pasture, Christ feeds his flock with a spiritual food: his own body and blood”. It all begun with the Incarnation and Jesus carried it out all the way through, finally concluding it with His redeeming Death and Resurrection. Once resurrected, He entrusted Peter, the Apostles and the Church, with this shepherding till the end of time.

Through the shepherds, Christ gives His Word, spreads out His divine Grace with the sacraments and steers His flock towards the Kingdom: He offers Himself as our nourishment in the sacrament of the Eucharist, imparts God's Word and Magisterial teachings, and caringly leads His People. Jesus has picked up shepherds for His Church in accordance with their heart, that is, those men that, by impersonating Him through the sacrament of Holy Orders, donate their lives for their sheep, with pastoral charity, with spirit of humble service, with leniency, patience and fortitude. Saint Augustine frequently spoke of this shepherd's demanding responsibility: “This shepherd's honor worries me..., if what I am for you frighten

me, what I am for you reassure me. For you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian."

And each one of us, Christians, work by supporting the shepherds, praying for them, loving them and following them. We are also shepherds for our brothers, by enriching them with the grace and doctrine we have received, by sharing their worries and joy and by helping everybody with all our heart. We go out of our way for all those encircling us in our familiar, social and professional world to the point of giving our life as a ransom for many of them with the same spirit of the Son of Man who "did not come to be served but to serve" (Mt 20:28).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "See if you are of his sheep, see if you know him, see if you perceive the light of Truth. Let us specify: if you perceive it, not by faith alone, but by love; not by merely believing, but by acting." (Saint Gregory the Great)

- "We fall down on our knees before the magnificence of the "Infinite Freedom" crucified. Jesus comes as the "good shepherd". But these are not just nice words: it is the reality! He literally gives himself up to death for us. And He does it with full freedom of Love." (Benedict XVI)

- "As for the Son, he effects his own Resurrection by virtue of his divine power. Jesus announces that the Son of man will have to suffer much, die, and then rise. Elsewhere he affirms explicitly: 'I lay down my life, that I may take it again... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again (Jn 10:17-18)." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 649)