

Monday 4th (A) of Easter

Gospel text (Jn 10,11-18): «I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Not so the hired hand or any other person who is not the shepherd and to whom the sheep do not belong. They abandon the sheep as soon as they see the wolf coming; then the wolf snatches and scatters the sheep. This is because the hired hand works for pay and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father. Because of this I give my life for my sheep.

»I have other sheep that are not of this fold. These I have to lead as well, and they shall listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock since there is one Shepherd. 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 freely. It is mine to lay down and to take up again: this mission I 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 St. 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. St. Augustine frequently spoke of this shepherd's demanding responsibility: «This shepherd's honor worries me (...), if what I am for you frightens me, what I am for you reassures 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).