

GOSPEL

John 10:1-10

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again: 'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them. I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

3 May 2020

The First Letter of the apostle Peter, which we have heard, is a passage of serenity (see 2:20-25). It talks about Jesus. It says, "He Himself bore our sins in His body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls" (vv. 24-25).

Jesus is the shepherd - this is how Peter sees Him - who comes to save, to save the sheep which had gone astray: they were us. And in Psalm 23, which we read after this letter, we repeated: "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want" (v. 1). The presence of the Lord as a pastor, as a shepherd of the flock. And Jesus, in chapter 10 of

John, which we have read, presents Himself as a shepherd. Moreover, not only as the shepherd, but the "door" through which the flock enters (see v. 8). All those who came before and did not enter through that door were thieves and brigands, or wanted to take advantage of the flock: false pastors. And in the history of the Church there have been many who have exploited the flock. They were interested not in the flock, but in advancing their careers, or politics, or money. But the flock recognises them, has always recognised them, and has gone in search of God on their own path.

But then there is a good shepherd who leads them ahead, the flock advances. The good shepherd listens to the flock, guides the flock, takes care of the flock. And the flock knows how to distinguish between these shepherds, it makes no mistake. The flock entrusts itself to the good shepherd, it entrusts itself to Jesus. Only the pastor who resembles Jesus can earn the trust of the flock, because He is the *door*. Jesus's style must be the style of the shepherd, there is no other. But even Jesus the good shepherd, as Peter says in the first letter, "Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way He took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in His mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when He was tortured He made no threats" (1 Pt 2:21-23). He was meek. One of the signs of the Good Shepherd is *meekness*. The Good Shepherd is meek. A pastor who is not meek is not a good pastor. He has something to hide, because meekness makes itself seen as it is, without defending itself. In addition, a good shepherd is tender; he has that *tenderness of closeness*, he knows the sheep one by one, by name, and he takes care of each one as if it were the only one, to the point that when he returns home tired after a day of work, and realises that one is missing, he goes out to work again in

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search of that one, and carries it back home with him, on his shoulders (see *Lk 15:4-5*). This is a good shepherd, this is Jesus, this is the one who accompanies us all on the path of life. And this idea of the pastor, this idea of the flock and of the sheep, is a Paschal idea. The Church, in the first week of Easter, sings that beautiful hymn for the newly baptised. “These are the new lambs”. Similar to what we heard at the beginning of the Mass. It is an idea of community, of tenderness, of goodness, of meekness. It is the Church that Jesus wants, and He guards this Church.

This Sunday is a beautiful Sunday, it is a Sunday of peace, it is a Sunday of tenderness, of meekness, because our Shepherd takes care of us. “The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want” (*Ps 23*).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



Head: What are the features of a good shepherd modelled by Jesus.



Heart: In times of prayer, what space do you give to listening, so as to come to know the voice of The Shepherd who is Jesus?



Hands: Our pastors are called to be good shepherds. How might you nurture, affirm and encourage them in this vitally important role in our parish communities.

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly **name/ describe** their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally **call on the Holy Spirit** to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer **prayers of thanks and praise** to God.
4. **Pray for each others’ prayer needs.** Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another **prayer of praise**, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be.’