

22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018 (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B)

Acts 4:8-12; Psalm 117(118):1,8-9,21-23,26,28-29; 1 John 3:1-2; John 10:11-18.

### **I am the Good Shepherd!**

Jesus declares that he is the Good Shepherd. The role of a shepherd is to look after the sheep entrusted into his care; takes them to lush green pastures and to fresh water sources, and protects them from thieves and wild animals. The Good Shepherd puts the good of the sheep before his own good. Jesus says that he is the Good Shepherd and that he will lay down his own life for the sake of the sheep under his care.

The Good Shepherd knows his sheep and invites the sheep to get into a personal relationship with him. His sheep 'know' him and he 'knows' them. The term to know in this context does not imply a relationship of acquaintances, but a relationship of trust. This 'knowing' relationship between the shepherd and his sheep is modelled on the same relationship that passes between the Father and the Son. The very life of the Trinity is offered to us as the basis of our relationship with Jesus.

We have just finished celebrating the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. In the gospel according to John, which is the same gospel from which today's gospel is taken, the author invites us to look at Jesus on the cross as being at his moment of glory. In today's gospel he tells the disciples that he is actually the one who is in full control of all that is happening around him and to him. It is he who, out of love of the Father and of the sheep in his flock, chooses to lay down his life. Jesus was free to run away from those who wanted to kill him, but his love for the Father and his love for us gave him the freedom to be able to give up his life for our salvation.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd; as his followers we are invited to follow him in being shepherds in to our own flock. Each one of us is called to be good shepherds to those entrusted to our care; we too need to be free to choose to lay down our life for those under our care. Jesus calls us to love in the same way the Father and him love each other. I am invited to offer ministry and service not because of what I am going to gain, but out of a deep love for those I am called to minister to. There are different ways we are called to be shepherds; at home, among friends, at our work place, in our parish community and in various other occasions. In each of these cases how do I witness to the love the Good Shepherd showers me with, and how do I offer my life to those around me?

We are all called to be shepherds and we are all given the gifts that help us live our call. How do I live my calling every day of my life?

Fr Mario