

“Shepherd Your Flock Like Jesus”

A few months ago, Karen & I were graced to be able to visit the ancient Mediterranean port city of Jaffa (Joppa), Israel. It has an incredibly rich history in general; but scripturally, to cite but a few references, it is the city where cedar was shipped in for the building of Solomon’s temple and the place where Jonah embarked on a ship in efforts to run away from God’s calling. It is also the city where Peter had the vision he spoke of in today’s reading from the Acts of the Apostles. A doorway marks the place claiming to be where Peter had stayed with “Simon the Tanner” and a nearby church bears the name of St. Peter, testament to the significance of both Peter and his vision.



Peter’s vision was of a large sheet coming down from heaven, filled with a variety of wild animals. A voice commanded him to eat of them; but he refused, citing their uncleanness according to his Jewish faith. The voice answered, *“What God has made clean, you are not to call profane.”* Our Jewish tour guide actually included this story in her tour and told our group they interpreted this as God’s signal to the Jewish people that it was okay to eat some of the foods they had once deemed forbidden. But the deeper, truer meaning of the vision as our



reading goes on to explain, is that God’s message of salvation is meant to be universal, not just for the Jewish people. As Jesus said in today’s Gospel, *“I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.”* Yes, praise God, it turns out the Good Shepherd died for all of humanity -- even us unclean, pagan Gentile sheep.

Our Gospel also notes the tragic consequences of a wolf finding a flock guarded by *“a hired man”* vice a true shepherd: fear and a scattering of the flock. This type of person may do a great job *“minding the store”* in good times; but under duress their core instinct is to protect self over the flock. Thus it is not surprising that he does not seek out the sheep that scattered. In the words of Christ, he truly *“has no concern for the sheep”* as much as for himself. Contrast this mere watchman with Jesus the Good Shepherd, who out of great Love *“lays down his life for the sheep”* and willingly leaves the 99 to go after even one lost sheep. We owe a debt of gratitude for the faithful priests who diligently strive to emulate the Good Shepherd.

We too, as parents, workers, students, etc with our large or small circles of influence (our own *“flocks”*) are called to look after the sheep entrusted to us with the same care and sacrificial love of the Good Shepherd. Not just the ones we like or approve of, but especially our wandering or challenging sheep. Bad shepherds like to pick and choose who they want in their flock, even going so far as to shoo away or

shun difficult sheep. But as the saying goes, “You can choose your friends, but you can’t choose your family!” The same should be true of the flock God entrusts to you... Shepherd your sheep like Jesus: love them, seek out the lost, give your all for them.

Peace,

Dcn Ron

May 04 2020; Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/050420.cfm>