

## GOD IS KING - THE GOOD SHEPHERD

We are all familiar with cowboys and cattle ranchers. At least, we have seen movies where cowboys are riding their horses and driving their cattle to market. You need a bunch of cowboys to drive a herd of cattle. You must push them from behind, forcing them to move, and you need other cowboys on the sides to keep them all together. Shepherding sheep is different. A shepherd walks in front of his flock, whistling or speaking or singing. The sheep follow along behind. As long as they can hear the shepherd's voice, they keep following but they must stay close enough to always hear his voice. As long as the shepherd is close by, the wolves will not attack the sheep. Only when a sheep falls behind, out of reach of the shepherd's voice, is there danger of getting lost and being attacked. When Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me," this is the image he has in mind. He wants to stay close to us, and he wants us to stay close to him, close enough so we can always hear his voice. In this way we can be sure to arrive safely to the rich pastures and refreshing streams of a meaningful, joyful life. He is not a distant God, and he doesn't want to save us from far away. This is the image God has of himself: our good shepherd, leading us through the dark and dangerous valleys of this world by walking right beside us, by staying always within hearing - in the sacrament of confession, in the Eucharist, in the Pope, in the Bible... He is not a cowboy driving us on from behind and keeping his distance; he is our shepherd, and he wants us to hear his voice and stay by.

God bless,  
Deacon John