

Our readings today point us toward the images of sheep and shepherds. "As Jesus went ashore he saw a great crowd and he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

But if we think about it, do we take kindly to being called sheep? Not likely.

We have all heard the expression, "Being led like sheep led to the slaughter." If we are accused of acting like sheep it means that we are acting with an unthinking docility; we have stopped questioning authority and are following blindly.

Normally it is not our best interest to behave like sheep.

Why? Because all too often the shepherds do not have our best interests at heart; they don't put us first. In our first reading Jeremiah speaks out against the shepherds of his day.

"It is you who have scattered my flock and have driven them away."

If we are too good at behaving like sheep we can get hurt; we can get burned.

But Jesus is the true shepherd, the perfect shepherd. "Jesus had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

And the key word is compassion. Our Lord's love for us is always there and it will get us through all things.

If we think about it we should not be afraid to be the good sheep of the most perfect shepherd. He's not going to burn us. There are so many things in life we can't control but despite all our many anxieties and worries and cares we cannot alleviate all the problems and sufferings that we face.

Maybe it would be good to let Jesus, to let the Good Shepherd worry about them.

We hear in today's psalm, the famous 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

He leads me beside still waters; he re-stores my soul.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil.

If I should walk in the valley of darkness, no evil would I fear.

The psalmist reminds us that when we let God lead us, when we let Jesus be the shepherd.

We will not fear the darkness of evil; our tired spirits will be renewed; we will receive rest and peace, there will be nothing that we will want.

So maybe, maybe being a sheep is not such a bad thing after all, especially if it is the Good Shepherd who is guiding us on our way.