

Fourth Sunday of Easter April 25, 2021

Sometimes, we are compared to sheep, which do not think for themselves, but just follow along blindly. Hence the saying, “the blind leading the blind.” Sheep are thought of as not very smart; they just follow the leader. There are times, like right now during this lockdown; we are compared to sheep that are just following along and not standing up for ourselves and our rights.

In reality, sheep are very smart. They know they need an excellent shepherd who will lead them to the best places to find green grass and clean water, steer them away from nature’s hazards, and protect them at all cost. Sheep respond to the voice of the shepherd. As a dairy farmer, I know cows respond to the voice of my son in the dairy barn. When it is time to move animals, all my son has to do is whistle, and the cows who know my son move. Pretty amazing to watch!

In this weeks Gospel reading, Jesus tells us he is the good shepherd. “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” Beware of the wolf that comes and scatters the sheep. It takes a pretty strong shepherd to stick with his sheep in the face of danger especially a wolf that has the ability to devour the sheep and attack the shepherd.

Some might think the story of the Good Shepherd is a little outdated. Not so! We have a shepherd who is constantly fighting for us, for our soul and for our redemption. The modern-day wolf, be it social media, money, drugs, alcohol, gossiping or gambling, is there tempting us, trying to pull us away from the flock. Do not be swayed by false happiness. Listen to the voice of the one true shepherd!

Just for a moment, put yourself in the place of the sheep. Could you let yourself totally trust someone else for your well being? Would you be able to follow along to green pastures with the shepherd and be content in doing so? Even if there is rough terrain and rocky ground along the way to the pastures that are located higher up a mountain, would you trust and follow? Or would you look for an easier path to take? What would it feel like to let the shepherd be in total control of your life? To be the sheep requires courage, no wait—it takes faith! There are even times when it requires blind faith!

This past week, I had the unpleasant task of cancelling sacraments booked for April and May that would have taken place during this particular lockdown. Just when we think we have returned to some sense of normalcy, we get yanked back, slowed down and sent home. It is only human to question these decisions made on our behalf. There is a lot out there on social media from people who feel their freedom is being infringed upon and who want to be free to make their own decisions. As for me, I take a step back, spend some time in prayer, and ask God, what he wants from me personally.

I firmly believe everything happens for a reason. I also believe each and everyday God has a message for me. I also know I can get so busy with work and life I miss the message. I trust the shepherd to provide for me. Lord, show me what it is I am to learn today. Thank you, Lord, for keeping me safe.

Reflection by Julie de Gouw, Pastoral Minister.