

SPIRITUAL LIFE

4th Sunday of Easter

By: Fr. Greg Ames

A few weeks ago, I told you about a rather boisterous and wild show that was hugely popular in Japan. Today we spin the globe, to an immensely popular show in England. It is simply called A Man and His Dog. Now listen to the plot of this action packed show: it is a show that features competitions of modern day shepherds herding sheep. Yes, it sounds incredible, but it is such a highly enjoyed show that when it was canceled, there was outrage. Apparently, people are drawn toward this show where shepherds stand around, whistling and shouting incomprehensible commands to their dogs who then herd groups of sheep. The entertainment, it is said, is in watching sheep who are too fast, too willful, too nervous and too thick to do as they are directed. *Even with the best dog in the world, if you got bad sheep, you're going to be struggling. You have to alter your tactics according to the sheep you have.* Many think the show's popularity stems from the fact that it helps people recall a simpler time, a simpler life. Said one observer: *Television is so full of glitz and glamour, its nice to see something different. It's like soothing music. There's a real beauty in a really good dog moving sheep very gently*

I am the good shepherd and I know mine and mine know me.

Perhaps we might watch a show like A Man and His Dog for a few minutes, die of boredom and turn the channel. On the Fourth Sunday of Easter, we always hear the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. I wonder if we hear it, can't relate to it, or just move on. Look at it again. Tune in one more time. For there is something very soothing... a real beauty that helps us live our Christian life: THE SHEPHERD, THE SHEEP, and THE NEXT VOICE YOU HEAR.

THE SHEPHERD Jesus used the image of the shepherd for one reason: he knew his disciples would get it. They understood that a shepherd cared for the sheep, would never steer them wrong, would rescue the sheep. The commitment of the shepherd to the flock was total. Throughout his life, Jesus always went to rescue those in need, to bring them back, to help them find a new sense of purpose. Jesus, a shepherd, can always be trusted, no matter what the cir-

cumstance. The only condition he places on those in the flock is simple: listen and follow.

THE SHEEP It may be disconcerting to know that sheep are basically not bright and at times troublesome. And yet there is something loveable about them. Truth be told, it sounds like us. Yet Jesus thinks of us as sheep because he believes that we are precious; we live in disposable society; lose something, you get a new one. Not sheep in a poor agricultural society. Every one is treasured. Peter learned that. When we hear him preaching in the Acts reading, he is able to do so because even though he was lost, not bright and troublesome, Jesus treasured him. That realization helped him spend the rest of his life pointing people not to himself, but to Jesus.

THE NEXT VOICE YOU HEAR On *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, one of the lifelines is to Call A Friend. When they make contact with the friend, Regis Philbin says, "The next voice you hear will be..." Just a few seconds of familiar voices trying to solve a question. Doesn't it drive you crazy when the friend just blatantly says, I don't know. Makes you wonder why they chose the friend. Along the journey, we all need lifelines: people who we count on; people who count on us. The author of the letter of John was a lifeline. He reminded the people of his time that they were valued not because of what they did or where they live, but because they were God's children. Who has been the lifeline that reminded you of that? In light of today's holiday, maybe it was a mother or grandmother. Whose voice led you to safety, to green pastures, to rest? Through whose voice did Jesus speak? Do you have gratitude for those voices, some of them very present, some long silenced?

The world, sometimes, can be filled with glitz and glamour, noise and distractions. Above all of that, the Shepherd is calling to you. He calls you when you are too fast, too willful, too nervous, too thick to do as you are directed. He calls you loveable and asks you to follow. The next voice you hear might be him. How will you answer, just for today?

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 4:8-12 1 John 3:1-2 John 10:11-8

April 26, 2015

靈 修 生 活

因 愛 而 犧 牲

小明堂區的助理本堂是位年輕的外籍傳教士，剛剛廣東話訓練班畢業，就被派往堂區實習，眾所周知中國語言是語言中最難學得好的，那位年輕的神父卻非常努力以有限的語文在彌撒中講道。

這天是善牧主日，神父也在所不免要講聖召道理，當天小明也很留心聽神父講道。彌撒後小明好像有所得著的告訴父親：「我明白今天教會為何這麼小人去做神父：因為犧牲好大的，要人付出很多嫁妝，而得來的人工反而很小，要這樣的偉大精神，做神父真是困難啦！」

父親聽後真的摸不著頭腦：什麼嫁妝、人工，為什麼神父會這樣講道理呢？在明查暗訪後終於真相大白，神父所講的是「莊稼固多，工人卻少；所以你們當求莊稼的主人派遣工人，來收祂的莊稼」（瑪九 37-38）而小明卻把「莊稼」誤作「嫁妝」，把「工人」誤作「人工」。所以就有這個「嫁妝」多，「人工」小這個笑話了。

若用「嫁妝」和「人工」來演繹今天的福音看似不敬，但想來也不無道理。耶穌形容自己為善牧而不是傭人，分別就在於願為羊群捨命，這犧牲不是捨棄身外物似的簡單，而是捨掉自己最寶貴的生命，是甘心情願的捨棄，就算遇到危險也不逃跑，因為善牧懂得「關心」；這個關心是源於一個重要的基礎，就是「父愛我」！

由於愛，甚至願意把生命成為「嫁妝」---「過門」，把生命許配給羊群。生命成為嫁妝，成為毫無保留的奉獻：忠誠、關心、捨命。從此祂不再為自己而活，卻為羊群而活。耶穌成為善牧是來自「父愛子」的命令，這聽從不是由於不得已，而是祂明白父的心意，由於「愛」的「甘心」，願意把「生命的嫁妝」傾出，使羊群也能分沾「父愛子」的愛。若望一書更迴響了這個信息，「請看父是怎樣愛我們，祂使我們得以稱為天主的兒女」，愛的代價就是走出自己，子被派遣居在人間，就是天主首先捨棄自己，降生成人，讓人藉著基督而信，

因而愛慕那位不可仰視的天主；將來一旦明顯了，因着這位善牧，我們將看到天主的真像。由此可見，羊群因善牧捨生的緣故，不單保命，更能提升生命，使「我們都要相似祂」成為天主的兒女。

因此這主日的福音描繪了今天天主教會中善牧的特徵，是「父愛子」的派遣，實現在教會的牧者身上，他的「人工」不單小，而是「人工」也捨棄，因為願意效法基督的全奉獻犧牲，成為不為自己而活，卻為羊群而活，「人工」不是物質的賞報，而是願意「一無所有」，最後成為「一無所缺」。由於「不屬於、不擁有」，反而成為自由的，這份不為物慾所約束的自由就是最佳的報酬，因為他有最豐富的「人工」——天主自己。

最後牧人與羊群同屬一棧，工人與莊稼同歸一牧——耶穌基督。宣講者與聽道者，奉獻者與平信徒同因基督的名字而得救，本主日的宗徒大事錄這樣說：「除祂以外，無論靠誰，決無救恩，因為在普世人間，再沒有賜下其他名字，使我們能賴以得救。」

禱文：天父啊！增加我們教友團體的信德吧！尤其是那些祢已經召選，及將蒙召選為侍奉祢的人們，使遲而不決的人作出決定，使受召的人能持守不渝。亞孟。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 五 年 四 月 廿 六 日

宗 4:8-12; 若一 3:1-2; 若 10:11-18