

This is also what we have to do. We have to let the Shepherd shepherd us. We have to sit there and say, "You are my Shepherd. I am just a dumb sheep." Some people do not like to be a dumb sheep. You are a dumb sheep. And so am I. We are all dumb sheep. We do not know about tomorrow. We cannot see tomorrow. The Shepherd can see tomorrow and the next day, and the next day and eternity. And if we allow ourselves to be shepherded, He is always going to lead us to everlasting life.

The key is, do you know the Shepherd and do you allow yourself to be shepherded by the Shepherd? Do you sit there and say, "Okay God, here are my plans. Please bless them because I know what I want." And God thinks, "Isn't that nice, but I have a different plan for you." I do not like your plan, God. Ha! Well you have a choice. You can either let Him shepherd you or you can try to shepherd yourself. But when you shepherd yourself, you are going to get into trouble. I promise. When you allow God to shepherd you, you will always have peace. You will always have life, even if you have to go through a tough time. God's plan is always a better plan than our plan. And God's plan always says that He loves us enough that He lays down His life for us.

Again, we can trust the Shepherd, because He has laid down His life for us. He is always more concerned about us than He is about Himself. Just keep thinking about that. Say that to yourself a thousand times a day. Jesus, the Shepherd, is always more concerned about us than He is about Himself. There is nothing you and I can do today, that God is not thinking of. He is always shepherding us, because He wants to lead us in His ways.



Today, when we go to and after Communion, like we do every week; I suggest that you sit there and "Be still. Close your eyes. Let Jesus hold you. Let Him put His arms around you. Put your head on His chest, like this little lamb does with the shepherd and listen to His heart beat." This is so that you and I can always know that we are loved. But it is not just supposed to happen on Sunday for five minutes. "Oh I love when we let Jesus hold us." You better let it happen every day. When you do that, and you let Jesus hold you, you'll know the Shepherd. And then, when you know the Shepherd, you can trust that He can shepherd you, that He will protect you, that He will "lead you by still water." His leading you will one day bring you to everlasting life. I hope that all of you understand how Jesus is always your Shepherd. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.

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Good Shepherd Sunday



***..." I am the good Shepherd:
the shepherd giveth His
Life for the sheep..."***

John 10:31

GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

a Sermon by

Father Larry Richards

Today we celebrate "Good Shepherd Sunday." All the readings talk about Jesus being our Shepherd and the Good Shepherd. Today I am wearing the vestment that I was given for my first Mass. It was given to me by my mother, and on it of course is "Feed my Sheep," which was the reading for my first Mass. In the center is Jesus the Shepherd. You cannot always see it from afar. People always say or think, what is that? It is Jesus and He is holding very close to His heart, the Lamb.

If any of you have not yet noticed, if you look up in our Church, there is a window of the Good Shepherd. This is one of the few parishes in this diocese that has Jesus as the Good Shepherd. If you get to see the big thick book on the history of the diocese, the front page of the book is our window, Jesus the Good Shepherd. So today is the day we celebrate His love for us.

You know, there is a story told about an actor from Canada who was coming back to his roots, to his church, his protestant church. Everyone was all excited and the church was full because he was a great orator. And they said, "Please, please, could you read for us Psalm 23." And he says, "Oh, no, no, no." And they said, "Please, Please, read for us Psalm 23." And he said, "I'll do it for you on one condition, that you let my father read it after me." And they said, "Oh sure, okay, no problem."

So the man got up and he started reading Psalm 23.

"THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD. THERE IS NOTHING I SHALL WANT." He read it so profoundly and graciously that after he was done everyone stood up and gave him a standing ovation, whistling and everything else. Then he said, "Now listen to my dad."

His dad got up. And his father began.

"The Lord is my Shepherd. There is nothing I shall want." When he was done, the people were crying and there was not one sound. The great man got up and he said, "You know the difference? I know the psalm, but my dad knows the Shepherd."

How about us? Do we know the psalm? Do we know what to do when we go to Church? Do we know what it is to be a Catholic? Do we know all the trappings? Do we know the Shepherd?

When He says, "My sheep will hear My voice. I know them. They know Me." And again, and again, and again, what we hear, at least ten times in the gospel today is "I lay down My life for My sheep." That means very clearly, that Jesus is always more concerned about us than He is about Himself.

You know that when you are talking to people, and they talk about prayer, they say, "Oh father, I'm not worthy to pray and I don't think God hears me. You know, I don't know how to pray. I don't know what to do." You know, "Will God hear me? I don't think God likes me." ...ta duh ta duh ta duh, ta duh ta duh...

Right before I came in for Mass, someone e-mailed me and said, "I don't think God likes me Father." I said, "You're probably right." **No I didn't.** But the reality is there. This should not even be a question. God loves us so much that He is the Shepherd who lays down His life for us, always. You are worthy of Him giving up His life. How could you ever even begin to think that He is not concerned about you in any way? Now, sometimes the Shepherd needs to be hard on us. And again, some of us want God to be Barney. "Always be nice to me. Let nothing bad happen to me. Everything will be fine. Please! If you let bad things happen to me that means you don't like me." — this is the farthest thing from the truth.

When I left the seminary, because of bad grades, I thought, "Boy, God does not really care for me." But God had a better plan. When God made me go to a different school to prepare me for the seminary, I said, "God, you really do not like me, do you?" But God had a better plan.

If I would have sat there when I went to the seminary at age 17 and mapped out my life, not one thing I was doing then, is what I am doing now. But God had a better plan. He had to shepherd me. He sometimes had to hurt me. He sometimes had to take me out of one position that I really wanted and put me somewhere else. What I saw as rejection was really God shepherding me so I could be what He wants me to be...