

Fourth Sunday of Easter
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Submitted by Claire O'Sullivan Keighley
and Patty O'Sullivan Sanders



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*“For this is what **the Sovereign Lord** says: **I myself will search for my sheep and I will rescue them from all the places. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel and I will tend them in a good pasture. I myself will have them lie down. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice...*** Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, **the Israelites, are my people, my sheep, and I am your God.** The prophecy in [Ezekiel 34:11-16, 30](#) (Modified)

A concept that came to my mind in reading this was how much it sounded like a job description to the Israelite shepherds. (The term Good Shepherd is in the New Testament). He tells them that for the present and future, “I will do these things for you. All of these are mine to give if you can accept the invitation of knowing that I am your God and you are my people, the sheep.” They did not have to fulfill scripture by themselves. There were a few references in the Old Testament about His being Shepherd and He would also send prophets, like David, to tend His flock. Many Israelites rejected His invitation and strayed farther from Him. I believe too many times their impatience took them away from believing that He would do what He had promised. Today’s gospel of the Good Shepherd is a repeat chorus of Ezekiel for all time.

It reminded me of a parenting challenge with one of my sons when he made a poor decision 10 years ago. I reminded him almost like the words above, that my role is to be a loving shepherd. He decided to reject what I was offering and be part of a flock separate from me. It was hard to understand why my son and the Israelites would say NO to this amazing commitment of love.

We are encouraged to open our ears to hear the Good Shepherd’s voice; to be like Him within our vocations and for all we meet, even when our smiles are behind masks.

-Claire O’Sullivan Keighley

I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me. (John 10:14)

Being part of the flock.

He is our God, and we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. (Palm 95:7)

Sheep have gotten a bad rap. Dumb, unfeeling, and mindless. The critics of Christianity use this kind of blind faith to describe the followers (the sheep) of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Would it surprise you to know that they are astonishingly intelligent, with impressive memory and recognition skills? Sheep make different vocalizations to communicate different emotions. They can learn their own name (I have called you by name. You are mine. (Isaiah 43:1) Sheep have feelings. They build friendships, stick up for one another in fights, and feel sad when their friends are sent to slaughter.

He knows us and we belong to Him. We are not seen or treated as a herd but as a unique, precious, and “only child”.

Why we need a shepherd.

Sheep cannot live without the shepherd. They are entirely dependent on the shepherd for everything. They require constant care and watching over. So, leaving them unattended can put them at risk and greatly endanger their lives.

Without a **shepherd**, it may also become hard for **sheep** to find pasture and water which they require for survival. Without a shepherd, sheep move about aimlessly, wandering here and there, getting lost, and generally paying little heed to the dangers around them.

The Good Shepherd takes on the risks. He walks among us. Not ahead of us or behind us. We trust that the Shepherd will lead us, feed us, and retrieve us. He is in it with us especially during uncertain times. We are known, loved, and protected.

Reflection:

Where is The Good Shepherd leading you?

What name does the Good Shepherd call you?

Who is part of your flock?

-Patty O’Sullivan Sanders

[Readings for the Fourth Sunday of Easter](#)