

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd

and whose sheep are not his own,

sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away,

and the wolf catches and scatters them.

This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd,

and I know mine and mine know me,

just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;

and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.

These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,

and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

This is why the Father loves me,

because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.

I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.

This command I have received from my Father."

Jn 10:11-18

It's been a month already since the women found an empty tomb. A lot of people are swearing that they have seen him. It seems that he is around, although there is something different about him. Would I recognize him?

Mary Magdalen, his dear friend, thought he was a gardener. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus didn't have a clue that it was him walking next to them for the whole day. His closest apostles Peter and John needed to see the lake and the fish to be struck by an unexpected observation: "It is the Lord." And finally, the most ridiculous, although the most obvious: "Is he a ghost?"

I need to ask myself if I will be able to recognize him. I know that the childhood image of a nice, loving, old man who will judge me justly somewhere in the yellow rays of eternity might not be entirely helpful. I know also that the sentimental quilt I made out of my wishful thinking and naive emotional projections doesn't really portray him very well either. It says more about me than about him.

How about the dark picture that I am afraid of? The negative reflection of my terrified sins, the image that I don't want to admit yet still hold close and use to terrorize myself. Although I know it is wrong, I keep letting it guide me into loneliness.

How about the intellect? I read so many books about him. I listened to so many lectures, good and bad. Will they help me when he comes in his risen beauty? Will I recognize him when he stands next to me?

What about my emotions? The disciples on the way to Emmaus testify that their hearts were burning when he spoke to them. Will my heart be burning when I meet him? Or will it be too tired, too confused, too cynical?

Will I be able to find the honesty of Thomas and touch his wounds? Will I be able to be pure like the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and become excited about the words of the scripture that portray him? Will I finally be able to cry with Mary Magdalen because I cannot find him?

To my great astonishment, he offers me the answer that helps my emotions and my intellect and liberates me from my fear and my delusions. I want to repeat after him:

“Lord, you are the good shepherd.
You lay down your life for me.
You are not a hired man. You don’t run away.”

“You are the Good Shepherd,
and you know me, and because of that,
despite all my confusions,
I know you.”