

# Fourth Sunday of Easter – May 3, 2020

Acts 2: 14a, 36-41 – 1 Peter 2: 20b-25 – John 10: 1-10

Virtually all my life, since the time when I learned to read, I have greatly enjoyed doing so. I have found that reading often takes me to far distant places, involving far different people and their lives. Reading calls upon the use of the imagination in order to expand and appreciate the context of the narrative that is being told. Not surprisingly, then, reading books has been suggested as one way to occupy our time in this new way of living we currently are experiencing.

As it happens, I have just begun reading a book entitled “The Alchemist,” in which the central character of the story is introduced as a shepherd caring for his flock of sheep in southern Spain. By a very fortunate coincidence, the author of the book has this individual reflect on numerous occasions on his life as a shepherd. The character speaks many times about the relationship between himself and his flock and how that flock looks to his presence with them and attends carefully to his voice. This account gave me a richer understand of the words and imagery Jesus used today in the passage from the Gospel of Saint John.

In this passage Jesus describes himself using an image taken from the pastoral setting of his time. Shepherds call their sheep and the familiarity of their voices lets the sheep know that they are protected. It is that same voice that calls us. It is a voice to be heard and to which a response is to be

made. It is a sound that is comforting and that promises protection. It is a sound we want to hear in the midst of challengers and difficulties such as those which confront us in the se says. It is a voice that we are to seek out because of the effect that it can have on us as well as the loving protection it declares.

But it is also a voice, a sound, which we must distinguish from so many sounds, so many noises, that surround us – sounds that so often distract us, disturb us, or entice us. They are sounds and noises that so easily disrupt and overwhelm us. In all the sounds that we hear day after day, are they not sounds that come from those who are boastful or critical or manipulative or untruthful? Ought it not be a voice, a sound, that calls us to recognize that we are loved, a voice that tells us of our dignity and value as persons, a voice that call us to love and to be loved, to care and to be cared for to which we respond?

A true shepherd of the sheep, as I have learned in my reading, identifies himself closely with the sheep, as did Jesus with w in God becoming man in him. In return we are to be like him, the gate, the door.

Consider the words of Saint Peter that were also read today. We are to be the same gateway as Jesus. We are to be a gateway, a doorway, that is open and welcoming.. We are to live in such a way that expresses forgiveness and speaks of truth in love. We are not to be defensive or vengeful, but truly welcoming in all respects. We are to voice within ourselves that same call that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, makes: a voice, a call, that puts forth, day after ay, a true and committed revelation to the our world, of a vibrant, living,

relationship with our good and gracious God.