

4th SUNDAY OF EASTER. THE GOOD SHEPHERD.
THE MAASAI PASTORALIST OF EAST AFRICA.

The Maasai are one of the tribes of East Africa especially in Kenya and Tanzania. They have maintained their culture in spite of the modern influence of technology. Apart from being renowned, long-distance runners they are PASTORALISTS, crisscrossing the two countries from time to time in search of pastures for their flock. They don't care about the boundaries so long as they have their pasture. They believe all the cows belong to them and were given by God and they should care for them at any cost. When it comes to the question of flocks they do take care of them regardless of the situation, they are very sensitive to the weather, predators, climate, or anything which could affect the flock. They are always with their flock whether in the rain, the dry season, night or day. They are aware of cattle rustlers, potential disease and wild beast attacks. They know which one needs attention and when. They are very gentle to those who need attention and they will leave the many to go and look for that lost one to make sure it comes back to the flock. They know each one of their flock and their flock knows their voice.

A 14 year boy had to fight with a lion to rescue one sheep. He was using a spear, not a gun, and in the final analysis he killed the lion though he was badly bruised. This shows how serious they are. They are good shepherds ready to lay down their lives for their flock.

It is against this background that our Gospel today talks about Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for us and who is constantly taking care of us.

A good shepherd cares for his sheep.

A good shepherd knows his sheep by name.

A good shepherd listens to the sheep.

A good shepherd cares for all the sheep, including those who don't belong to his flock.

He pays attention to all of them. He is ready to die for his flock. This is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He knows our very inner self and our true name. A good shepherd gathers his flock together and he will always go for the missing one. A good shepherd will always be available to his flock. He knows the flock and their needs. But, the flock has to listen to his Voice.

In a world full of so much fragmentation, political affiliations, different cultures, languages, and nationalities there are many voices which can really confuse the flock. If we listen to His voice he will gather us together in the same paddock where we can call Home. If we drift from the flock due to these other voices, he is always very concerned and caring to call us back. ***"If today you would listen to His voice harden not your hearts."***

To those who have never belonged to the flock, he will send ***light through you and me to direct them to the true fold.*** How do you respond to this mission? ***He is sending His Grace to bring back the lost and the stranded. You are his instrument. Can you be a good shepherd to somebody today?***

Where the flock is, that is where the shepherd will be. Christ will always be with his flock. He is inviting us today to a place where there is green pasture and water. Whether the sheep is on a cliff, mountain, or valley, his rod and staff will give them courage.

Parents, teachers, priests, nuns, counselors, coaches, deacons, and mentors are all called to be SHEPHERDS.

WE CAN MAKE THE WORLD BETTER BY SHEPHERDING ONE ANOTHER.

