



In this week's Gospel (Jn 10:11-18) Jesus boldly proclaims, "I am the good shepherd." He then proceeds to teach us the meaning of this metaphor. What are the characteristics of the good (i.e. authentic) shepherd? The good shepherd, in contrast to the "hired man" who only works for pay, does not abandon the sheep when he sees a wolf coming to attack; He is concerned for His sheep, they belong to Him; He "knows" them and they "know" him; He leads them, they hear His voice; He unites them as one flock, protects them and ultimately would lay down his life for them. Now this is quite the dedicated shepherd!

Today we might ask the question, "Where is this good shepherd?" At least on the surface of things, we see great divisions within the flock of Christ. It seems the wolf has caught and scattered the flock. Many Catholics today openly, publicly, reject the sound and clear teaching of the Catholic Church – especially her moral teachings regarding the sanctity of life, sexuality, marriage, and family. Has the good shepherd left his sheep and run away? Is Jesus like the "hired man" who has no concern for the sheep? Is He no longer speaking and leading His beloved flock?

My friends, the good news is, JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, WILL NEVER ABANDON HIS SHEEP! Today, we can hear His voice as clearly as when He walked the earth! He is concerned for us; We belong to Him; He continues to lead us and unite us in the eternal truths as He promised He would! The Good Shepherd charged St. Peter along with his fellow Apostles to feed and

tend His sheep and He promised to be with them until the end of the world. Saint Paul summarizes this beautifully:

"And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love." (Ephesians 4:11–16)

According to St. Paul, the and swept along by every human trickery" are precisely their faith: the spiritual there will always be those hear the truth of the moral Scriptures teach us:

"I am the good shepherd, I know mine and mine know me ... I will lay down my life for the sheep ... These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

ones being "tossed by waves wind of teaching arising from those who are not mature in "infants." At the same time, who simply do not want to law. In the book of Sirach, the

"He who hates the law is without wisdom, and is tossed about like a boat in a storm. The prudent man trusts in the word of the LORD, and the law is dependable for him as a divine oracle." (Sirach 33:2–3)

To my mind, to imply in any way that Jesus has abandoned His Church borders on blasphemy. The problem is not that the Good Shepherd has somehow gone bad, but that some of the flock stubbornly refuse to listen. The Good Shepherd continues to lay down His life for His sheep, but are the sheep ready to hear His voice, believe Him, and follow Him wherever He leads? Consider the words of St. James:

"But if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he will be given it. But he should ask in faith, not doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord, since he is a man of two minds, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:5–8, NAB)

Your Servant in Christ,
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