

## HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER 2017

1. To better understand the image of the Good shepherd, we have to try to imagine Israel in time of Jesus
  - a. The Judean hills and area around Jerusalem are very dry countryside
  - b. Shepherds are not able to stay in one place and keep sheep in a gated fence
  - c. Instead the grass for the sheep will grow near streams and springs
  - d. Will not take long for a herd of sheep to eat all the grass in any one place
  - e. So they have to keep moving the sheep
2. Shepherds did not go home to some ranch house
  - a. They would stay out in the hills watching over their sheep day and night
  - b. Picture a shepherd watching the sheep as they graze
  - c. He will have nothing else to do but to watch the unique characteristics of each animal
  - d. Likely he gives each of his sheep a name
  - e. If starts going off to some dangerous place, he will call it to himself probably giving some reward for responding to its name so that it obeys him
3. At night two or three shepherds would find a large cave for their flocks
  - a. They would block most of the cave with brush to keep sheep in and predators out
  - b. One of the shepherds would sleep at the entrance acting as a gate while rest of shepherds would be sleeping near the sheep to keep them calm
  - c. This gatekeeper is going to keep out everyone but another shepherd
  - d. If a thief wants to steal the sheep, he is not going to get in through the gatekeeper
  - e. Gatekeeper will know his friends quite well and will prevent any stranger from having access to his sheep
  - f. It will be the thief that tries to climb in through another way
4. Because the sheep spend all their time with the shepherd they will become accustomed to his voice

- a. They will have learned that when he calls them, they find fresh food and water
  - b. So they will trust his voice
  - c. If they hear a strange voice, it will spook them and scare them off
5. Jesus wants us to recognize Him as the Good Shepherd
- a. He not only protects us and feeds us when we follow him
  - b. He gives His very life to protect us
  - c. Jesus wants us to see Him as the gate to truly green pastures
  - d. As the letter from Peter says, Jesus is a shepherd who calls us to Himself even though we may wander off
6. We gather together every week to listen to the voice of Jesus
- a. He gathers us together to feed on his very own body and blood
  - b. Jesus calls us to Himself even if we do wander away from Him
  - c. He invites us to know that He is the gate to true happiness and life
  - d. Jesus urges us not to follow the siren calls of false gods, temptations to transitory pleasures that society offers
  - e. he invites us to always listen for His voice in our lives.