

Shepherds vs. Robbers

One midnight, a nice car pulled up in front of a computer shop. People alighted, opened the shop door, and began loading computer units inside the car, leaving with practically all the computers they could carry. Witnesses thought the owners of the shop were bringing their computers somewhere else. But then, as they departed, why would these men leave open the door? The neighbours later realised that those guys were *thieves*.

Jesus contrasts Himself with thieves and robbers in the Gospel today. The thieves come to steal and destroy. They take away what they do not own. They care not for the good of the owners. They are consumed by their own selfishness. The Lord calls Himself with two descriptive names: the *Shepherd* and the *Gate of the sheepfold*. That *Jesus is Shepherd* is easy to understand. Just remember the pictures of Jesus holding a lamb in his arms and followed by a flock of sheep. Jesus tends the weak sheep and guides the flock to green pastures. What about the *Gate of the sheep*? Sometimes, when the flock pastures in the green outdoors and stays there for the night, the shepherd makes a temporary enclosure for them, placing his body at the opening of the pen so that no sheep can escape, or no predator can enter. Jesus was like that, too! In this Easter time, Jesus tells us that He is risen so that He can guide and protect His people. He also tells us that He continues to be Shepherd through people He has chosen as His representatives among men.

The good shepherd has provided for people whose task will be to lead the people closer to the Lord and more faithfully to the truth. Today we have these shepherds in the person of our pastors – the bishops and priests who serve our Christian communities. We are grateful for holy shepherds like Saint John Paul II, whose portrait of loving concern for all remains brilliant in our collective memory. Of course, our pope now, Pope Francis, speaks so clearly and eloquently about the truth and joy that come from the Gospel. They are examples of a good shepherd. With Jesus as our Good Shepherd, He is calling us to love. We can be shepherds in our own little way – by sharing love of Jesus to one another. It is sad that, in the last pandemic scare of the corona virus, many so-called Christians led the panic-buying, spreading of fake-news, corruption in distribution of needed help, discrimination against the sick and the medical frontliners, profiteering...and many other acts of greed and hatred. Is this the response to Jesus' love? Is this the assent to His invitation? Is this the way to receive His blessing? Maybe in our prayer time, let us ask the Lord to know with conviction *how much we are loved* through His Death and Resurrection. We ask furthermore, for the grace to truly give our hearts to Him so that we can be transformed into the new men and women of the Kingdom.

As Catholics, we have a special reverence and love for our pastors, not because of any unique human quality (*not just because Fr Francis is good-looking hehe...just kidding...just want to make you smile*), but because we see in them the presence of the Shepherd who visits our lives in many forms of service. Recently, we hear many voices, certainly from thieves and robbers, discrediting the guidance of our shepherds. They do this to further their own agenda of destroying the faith of the weak, sowing disunity among the people and contesting the teachings of Jesus and his Church. When people want to destroy the Church, they first attack the shepherds who teach and instruct the people.



As Christians, we know that **Jesus** is our **Good Shepherd** and that after His resurrection, He did not abandon us but He continues to lead us to green pastures and clear waters.

**Let us listen to Jesus speaking through our shepherds.
Let us pray for our shepherds and support them in their mission.
God bless you and your family!**