

Homily
4th Sunday of Easter – 5/12/19
Deacon Rich

Today's Gospel is from John 10:27-30. This Sunday is often called "Good Shepherd Sunday." Jesus intended the beautiful parable of the Good Shepherd with its many consoling truths and promises for men of every century, including the twenty-first. We are all too prone to evaluate the words of the Gospel in an exclusively historical sense. The liturgy's primary aim is to portray the present, not the past, to give grace and life along with history. You must, therefore, give the parable a present-day context, apply it personally. After each sentence stop and say: Christ is doing this today – and to help me. The parable brings to our attention three consoling truths: Christ gives His life for His sheep; He remains with them constantly through the bond of grace; He will not rest content until there be but one flock and one shepherd.

Now how do these points affect me personally? a) My shepherd's death means my deliverance – why, even at this very moment of Mass, redemption's graces are flooding my soul. b) Between Christ and myself there must exist a closer intimacy than even that between brothers, relatives, or friends. c) It is through Christ's efforts that I have been brought into the fold, and He is ever striving to make me a more perfect member of His flock.

In order to realize these ends, Christ instituted His Church. This Church is His representative. There we may approach Him, there He is close to us, there He continues His presence: "I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the world." Through the Church He speaks to us; in the Church flow the rivers of grace from Calvary's Cross; by means of the Church Christ seeks to become united personally with each of us. Oh, if we would only regard the Church as Christ mystically present in our midst! At this point I would like to single out two ways by which Christ fulfills His office of Shepherd in the Church, viz., through His words and through His very Body.

The words He spoke will never die. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Christ's words are as pregnant with life now as when they were first spoken. They give us the mind of our Good Shepherd as He

instructs, warns, and consoles us; they are the words of a father, a mother, a brother, a friend, a judge. Once upon a time Christ's words preformed miracles; they have not lost their power! "Young man, I say to you: arise." "This day you shall be with Me in Paradise." Treasure Christ's words most highly.

Christ's Body in the Eucharist gives flesh to His words in the Gospel. Never disjoin one from the other. For together they constitute our most valuable earthly treasure, together they give us the whole Christ. What He promises in the Gospel He fulfills in the Eucharist. And thus, the Mass, comprising the word and the body of Christ, brings Him completely to us. In the Gospel He says, "I am the Good Shepherd" – in the Eucharistic Sacrifice the Good Shepherd becomes present. In the Gospel He proclaims, "I lay down My life for My sheep." – in the Eucharistic Sacrifice He pours His life into our souls. In the Gospel He tells us, "I know Mine and Mine know Me." – in the Eucharistic Sacrifice He fulfills His claim: "Whoever eats My flesh abides in Me and I in him." In the Gospel He says, "Other sheep I have...them also must I bring." – through the Eucharistic Sacrifice He builds up His flock, gathering stray sheep into the fold.

These, the, are out two greatest treasures: Christ's words and Christ's body. By embracing both we embrace our Savior whole and entire.