

04.26 CCV

John 10.11-18

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer! Amen.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

The image that the Gospel places before us today is at once simple and inexhaustible. Christ speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd. It is an image that belongs to the most ancient layers of biblical revelation, and yet, in the mouth of Christ, it receives a new and definitive depth.

For in Israel, the shepherd was always more than a pastoral figure. He was an image of kingship, of responsibility, even of God himself. And yet, the history of Israel is marked by the failure of shepherds those who were entrusted with care, but who ultimately served themselves.

Against this background, Christ’s words take on their full weight:

“I am the good shepherd.”

This “I am” is not merely descriptive, it is revelatory. It echoes the divine name. In Christ, God himself becomes the Shepherd of his people.

But how does he shepherd?

Not by power. Not by domination. But by self-giving.

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Here we touch the inner heart of the Gospel. Authority, in the logic of God, is inseparable from sacrifice. To lead is to give oneself. To be a shepherd is to enter into the vulnerability of love.

And this, perhaps, is the decisive contrast that Jesus draws: the hired hand runs away because the sheep are not his own. Only the one who loves only the one to whom the sheep truly belong remains. Christ remains.

Yet the Gospel goes further.

“I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.”

This is a remarkable statement. The relationship between Christ and the believer is placed in analogy with the relationship between the Father and the Son. That is to say: the knowledge of which Jesus speaks is not merely intellectual. It is participatory. It is communion.

To be known by Christ is to be drawn into the very life of God.

And thus, Christianity is not, at its core, an ethical system or an institutional belonging, it is a relationship. A being-known and a being-loved that precedes all our response.

Dear brothers and sisters,

On this Sunday, Good Shepherd Sunday, the Church invites us also to reflect on vocation, not as a private project, but as a response to a voice.

For vocation begins not in our choosing, but in being called.

And yet, this call often unfolds in ways that are neither linear nor immediately transparent. It leads us, sometimes, through questions, through tensions, even through moments of inner division.

I must confess that this has been true in my own life.

There was a time when I believed my path was clearly defined within the Roman Catholic Church. And I remain deeply grateful for all that I received there. Yet over time, certain theological questions became unavoidable for me.

I found myself unable to fully assent to certain teachings among them the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the notion of a temporal purgatory. But beyond these theological considerations, there emerged a more personal and existential question: the call to lifelong celibacy.

This was not merely a matter of discipline, but of truthfulness before God. Could I say, with integrity, that this was my path?

And gradually, I came to recognize that I could not.

I did not wish to walk alone for the whole of my life.

When I once expressed this, with some hesitation, to members of a congregation, a man of quiet wisdom responded with a single word:

“Family.”

It was a simple word, but it contained a profound theological insight.

For the Christian vocation is never only a renunciation; it is always also a belonging.

And here, something became clear to me in a new way.

The Church is not first an institution. She is a communion. She is a family: born not of blood, but of the Spirit.

And in these past months, serving among you, this truth has become concrete for me.

I have found here, a family.

A family that transcends nations and cultures. A family in which the universality of the Church, the true catholicity, becomes visible. In this congregation, the Anglican Communion is not an abstract reality, but a lived one.

And I have come to understand, perhaps more deeply than before, that to be a shepherd is never to stand above the flock, but to belong within it.

For the shepherd, too, is a sheep known and called by the same Lord.

There is also a personal dimension of place that I cannot leave unspoken.

Vienna has become, in a real sense, my home.

I first came here as a young man of nineteen, not yet aware of how decisive that time would be. I returned later as a Ministry Experience Scheme intern, and then again to serve among you as a priest.

Looking back, one can perceive a certain unity, a hidden guidance.

What at the time appeared as separate episodes now reveals itself as a path.

And this, too, belongs to the mystery of the Good Shepherd: that he leads us often without our full understanding, and only in retrospect do we begin to see.

Yet the Gospel also reminds us that the Shepherd leads onward.

“I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also.”

The movement of Christ is never static. His call always contains within it a sending.

And so, with both gratitude and a certain inner sobriety, I must share that I am being led further.

I will continue my ministry in the United States.

This is not simply a change of place. It is, once again, an act of trust in the voice that calls.

For the Christian life is, in its deepest structure, a pilgrimage.

We are not those who possess, but those who are led.

And perhaps this is what I am learning more and more: that to be a priest is also to be a pilgrim.

One who does not belong to himself.

One who is sent.

One who bears witness, not to himself, but to Christ.

Dear friends,

At the center of today's Gospel stands a promise:

No one can take the sheep out of the Shepherd's hand.

This is the ground of our confidence.

Not our strength.

Not our clarity.

But his fidelity.

He knows us.

He calls us.

He gives his life for us.

And in the light of Easter, we know that this gift is not defeated by death, but fulfilled in resurrection.

The Good Shepherd lives.

And because he lives, our path, however uncertain it may appear, is held within his love.

Let us, then, entrust ourselves anew to his voice.

Let us allow ourselves to be led, sometimes into what is familiar, sometimes into what is new.

And let us remain united, wherever we may be, as one flock under one Shepherd.

For the one, who was crucified and rose again, our Savior: He is the Good Shepherd.

Amen.