**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

April 22nd 2018

Today's Gospel contains one of the seven 'I am' statements from Jesus. These are used to reveal more about His nature to us; this particular scripture explains that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. For us in the 21st Century, this analogy may not seem as relevant to us as others, I know I have never looked after sheep or even met a shepherd. However many of those listening to Jesus would have been shepherds or at least known about this vital occupation of the time. There is still much we can learn about Jesus from this passage, especially His desire to show us sacrificial love.  
  
We hear in the first verse: 'I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.' At the time Jesus was speaking to the people, they would have known that a shepherd's whole life revolved around his sheep. In a similar way, we mean everything to Jesus (just like in the parable of the lost sheep, Matt 18:12-14) He is willing to do anything for us, even die on the Cross 'of His own accord.'  
  
This leads us to the next part of the passage where Jesus says 'I know my sheep and my sheep know me- just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.' I love this verse as it tells us that Jesus know us as much as He knows His Father in Heaven. He loves me as I am part of this relationship. This verse also presents me with an invitation: if I am to be a true follower of Jesus then I must know Him as intimately as He knows me. It encourages me to go deeper in my understanding of Jesus and grow in my relationship with Him.  
  
Today, we pray for all followers of Jesus, that we may allow Him to care for us and follow Him as our Good Shepherd.  
  
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