

**FOR THE WEEKEND OF APRIL 24-25, 2021**

Fourth Sunday of Easter/Good Shepherd Sunday

**Gospel**Jn 10:11-18  
  
Jesus said:  
“I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd

and whose sheep are not his own,

sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away,  
and the wolf catches and scatters them.  
This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.  
I am the good shepherd,  
and I know mine and mine know me,  
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father,  
and I will lay down my life for the sheep.  
I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.  
These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,  
and there will be one flock, one shepherd.  
This is why the Father loves me,  
because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.  
No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.  
I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.  
This command I have received from my Father.”

**Homily helper / connection to stewardship / giving / charity / almsgiving**

* We treat things differently when they belong to us.
  + Perhaps just human nature, but this also explains, to some extent, why the Church has affirmed the goodness of private property (Rerum Novarum, 1893)
  + Not to enable selfishness, but because we are better stewards of the gifts of God when we have a person stake in them.
* Jesus draws upon this truth to highlight His love for the Church in today’s Gospel
  + A good shepherd “lays down his life for the sheep.” A hired man, who has less of a personal stake in the sheep, runs away at the first sign of trouble.
    - Interestingly, as some commentaries have pointed out, a good shepherd actually *wouldn’t* sacrifice his own life for a sheep…but Jesus is building upon this analogy to demonstrate the radicality and newness of Christian love.
* How can we be “good shepherds” in our own life?
  + In our communities. Maybe consider getting involved in the school board, or running for city council.
  + Especially in our parish. God has entrusted it to us. We are the “good shepherds” preparing a pasture for our children and others who need a place where they can be nourished and protected.
  + Or are we just hired men, who only see our parish as a place we keep at arm’s length, get in and get out once a week on Sunday, where we don’t have any real ownership?
  + Annual Diocesan Appeal is a great way to be “good shepherds” of our parish community.

**Intercession**

For our Annual Diocesan Appeal, that we may follow the lead of the Good Shepherd by investing in our parish community.

**Copy for bulletin announcement**

If a kid asks her parents for a dog, she might hear this response: “If you take care of it.” The logic is simple: human beings respond to responsibility. We tend to treat things better when they belong to us.

Jesus knows this, and shows us in today’s Gospel that His love is not the love of a hireling, who runs away when faced with trouble. Instead, He loves like the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for His sheep, precisely because they are *His* sheep. When we have a stake in something, we tend to invest in it.

God has entrusted each of us with this parish community. We are all truly members of it, and we all have a stake in it. The Annual Diocesan Appeal is a great way to imitate the Good Shepherd by caring for what belongs to us, as opposed to merely using it like a hireling.

Do we really believe that our parish is ours, that it’s been entrusted to us as a gift from God? If so, what should our commitment through the Annual Diocesan Appeal look like? And if not, why not? God wants us to be a part of the fold, because He knows that responsibility and relationship are the only ways to grow in love. Please consider making a gift as a response to Christ’s call to be a good steward.

**Copy for pulpit announcement**

Our parish community has been entrusted to us, and the Annual Diocesan Appeal is a great opportunity care for what belongs to us. Consider how you can follow the lead of the Good Shepherd through your stewardship, and make a gift during this Easter season.

**Social media post/content**

Photo: Good Shepherd image. “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11)

Copy: We care about what belongs to us. Contribute to the Annual Diocesan Appeal.