

Readings: Acts 2: 14, 36-41, 1 Peter 2: 20-25, John 10: 1-10



Fr Michael says:

The Good Shepherd

A Shepherd is courageous, ready to sacrifice himself for the life blood of the tribe – which is the sheep! He knows them all and they follow Him because they know his voice and trust him! He leads the sheep to good pasture and secure resting places. This is the reason why Jesus is proclaimed as the Risen Lord, and He invites us to follow Him through repentance and Baptism. In Acts, the powerful message from Peter, is addressed to slaves, who could claim nothing and whose lot in life was to bear pain and ill treatment and who are asked to do as Jesus did - give His life for others, through accepting totally what happened to Him. John's Gospel stresses the power of this love, for us all, no matter where we are in the social scale!

Jesus' Mission in life is clear: "I have come that you may have life, life to the full!" He is talking of our life here and now as well as in eternity. A Spanish legend has it that St Peter at the pearly gates, asks one question – "Have you taken full measure of earthly joys, which God gave you on earth. If the answer is "No" then he replies: "Sorry, friend, you cannot come in, at least not yet, you need to go back on earth to do so."

A lot of our upbringing, has probably been to reflect the negative side of things and what should not be done, indeed we were expected to be detached from the good things, we are in the "vale of tears"! So this leads often to half-heartedness, keeping something back, cautiously, indeed fearfully. Our devotions should not stop us living life to the full!

The present moment is precious! It is soon gone! There is an Aztec saying: "For we do not enjoy this world everlastingly, only briefly; our life is like the warming of oneself in the sun." The Good Shepherd wants us to have life, fully – let us live out our callings as totally as we can and give thanks for how we are so doing regularly – it enhances our living richly each moment! We are meant to live, not just exist! As Louis Thoreau puts it: "Fear not that your life will end: rather fear that it may never have begun!" Jesus proclaims in the Gospel: "Believe in the Good News, I came that you may have life and have it to the full!"

As we look at our lives and how meaningful they are, we can begin to see how compassion is not learned, but acquired through suffering and unless we have undergone this process, we cannot really understand what it is – or even be a comfort to those who are suffering. We can go further – unless we have gone through periods of darkness, we can't help wanderers on their searching way. If we have undergone these experiences, then indeed we can be pathfinders for others, as it is by reaching out to others that we ourselves are healed. Jesus bore the marks of our violent world on His body; they are proofs of His love, as he sought to care for us. May our vocations be the source of consolation, courage and hope as we suffer; by His wounds we are healed and we heal others and build them up.