

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Easter (C)

17<sup>th</sup> April 2016

'The Good Shepherd'

Acts 13: *all were destined for eternal life became believers* Ps 99: *we are His people, the sheep of His flock* Apoc 7: *the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd* Jn 10: 27–30: *the sheep that belong to me listen to my voice.*

I shall speak only briefly today, as — very happily — we have one of the seminarians from Allen Hall to address us at the end of Mass. We've just heard some extremely powerful words there, in the Gospel: *The sheep that belong to Me listen to My voice: I know them and they follow Me.* Now, when we stop and think about it, this is a truly extraordinary thing: Almighty God is willing to be a *Shepherd*: not just a powerful and distant God, keeping aloof and mysterious, but coming amongst us into the dirt and grime of daily life, to be a Shepherd ... to actually personally guide us, lead us, feed us, so that we will not get lost, but may keep to His Way, the way to eternal life.

We celebrate today our Lord who referred to Himself as the 'Good Shepherd' — He knows His sheep and leads them; He calls each one by its name. He calls each one of *us* by name. We are not 'anonymous Christians' — we are known, and named and called. If you look back on your life

— are there not good things which have come your way; things to give thanks for, things which have only come your way thanks to the goodness of God? Has He not in fact given you guidance across the years, as you look back and reflect? In small and quiet ways? Ways you never perhaps recognised at the time, but now you see how all along He was shepherding you in the right paths? It is a rich and blessed image that Jesus gives us of Himself as 'the Good Shepherd,' a moving, and tender image, and if we really take it to heart then we could never leave Him or turn away from Him: to be in His flock is to be cared for for ever.