

# Trinity News

## Fourth Sunday of Easter The Shepherd of Israel and of the Church

The central theme of the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel as we have received it is that of the Good Shepherd. The theme of the good Shepherd in Israel derived originally from a rural scene. That is, a Shepherd looking after sheep. We live in a populous city teeming with people and we have to go out of the city to find anything that looks like a rural scene. What is the model of Shepherd therefore mean in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a huge metropolis like Manila? Sheep thrive in dry climates of around about 15 to 20 inches of rain a year and that doesn't fit here.

What are we to make of model of the Shepherd because Christ clearly aligns that role to himself? One of the reasons he does this is because God is seen as the Shepherd of Israel. It also lines up with the prophets, and in particular Amos who was a shepherd himself. The Bishop in our Church carries a pastoral staff as a symbol of being a Shepherd. It is in fact the oldest symbol as far as I know of being a Bishop. So what are we to make of this image and model in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The Shepherd is a model of nurture. Shepherds also have to know the sheep that are in their care. Jesus says that the good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. This accords with his own offering of his life at the Cross. The shepherd is a guide and has to know where the sheep are headed.

It is interesting in the passage set for today from John 10 that the notion of the shepherd and the sheep is intertwined with questions about whether Jesus is really the Christ or not. The Jews want him to declare that he is the Messiah. This may have been an entrapment or it may have been that they had some secret hopes of their own that someone would come who would rescue them from the oppression of the Romans. That oppression led to other oppressions within their own country from their own people.

Jesus says that the sheep hear his voice. He says that they follow him because they are assured by his voice and somehow they sense that there are safe with him.

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one” (John 10:28-30). This leads to the threat of stoning from the Jews because they could not conceive that a mere man could presume to put himself on a par with God. Was he saying that straight out?

Jesus had pleaded with them to recognize his miracles as signs of his Messiahship and he thus asserted his right to be recognised as the one who was to come, the expected Messiah. This definitive approach on the part of Christ to his status within God and from God is peculiar to John’s gospel. The other three Gospels do not make such claims so often, so clearly, and in such a specific manner.

Jesus identifies himself with the Shepherd of Israel. He also offers descriptions of what he thinks the good Shepherd should be in terms of role and effectiveness. It has been applied to bishops but it is so much more than that its application. A father is a Shepherd and mother is a Shepherd. A teacher is a Shepherd and a counsellor is a Shepherd. The child who leads another child out of danger is a Shepherd. The young person who saves another young person from bullies is a shepherd. The priest is a Shepherd and a layperson reading the prayers in the church is a Shepherd. The doctor is a Shepherd the good leader is a Shepherd. The shepherd serves God and the people.

Bishop Arthur Jones



### **NEXT WEEK’S READINGS:**

Acts 13:44-52; Psalm 145; Revelation 19:1,4-9; John 13:31-35

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#### **TO PLAN:**

April 24, Wednesday.

- Bible study, 10am.
- Group discussion about Christian Meditation on the Scriptures, 7:30pm, Parish office.

**Booklet: When God Speaks**  
*(by Henry & Richard Blackaby)*

April 25, Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10am, Chapel.

#### **BANNS OF MARRIAGE**

I publish the Banns of Marriage  
between

*John Jerusalem Agustin Tiongson*  
and

*Ma. Luisa Gwenn Florido Pabellano.*

If any of you know just cause why they  
may not be joined together in Holy  
Matrimony, you are bidden to declare it.

This is the **third** time of asking.