

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

By Fr. Viet Tran, S.J.

Living in modern society, we take for granted many things. We no longer see a green pasture of a hillside with sheep and shepherd. The supermarket where we can go to bring home whatever we like for food takes the place of the pasture. Politicians and other public figures use media as means to show off their eloquence and to draw the masses to follow them. They take on the role of the shepherds. With the mindset, how can we see and understand the sacrifice and braveness of a shepherd for his sheep, or a close and mutual bond between sheep and shepherd described by Jesus in today's gospel: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."?

In the Highlands of Scotland, sheep often wander off into the rocks and get stuck in places that they can't get out of. The grass on these mountains is very sweet and the sheep like it so much that they will jump down ten or twelve feet to reach it—but then they can't jump back, and the shepherd hears them bleating in distress. They may be there for days, until they have eaten all of the grass. The shepherd will wait until they are so faint they cannot stand, and then he will put a rope around them, one by one, and he will go to pull them up out from rocky slope. (Moody's Anecdotes, pp. 70-71.)

Like the sheep in the highlands of Scotland, we may have some experiences of being lost and trapped and waiting for some mysterious savior. We may think of an experience when we were visiting a new place while driving a car; we may think of walking a trail on a hiking trip. We became nervous and wanted to have a map or meet someone to ask for directions—we wanted to travel with some form of a guide.

In the same way, on our faith journey unexpected events happen. We may feel lost and unbalanced on our standing ground and confused like 'sheep wandering off into rocks.' in those moments we need someone to console us and to offer us some word of guidance and support. We always need shepherds in

our lives. Jesus is our good shepherd, as he states in the Gospel. However, while we look for him physically, he never shows up. We think we are alone, lost in our journey to find a way out of the maze that traps our life during difficulties and hardships.

We always pray and hope for perfect and happy life. In reality, we have faced struggles and have felt at a loss to deal with crises. Last week, I visited and anointed a 40 year old friend whom I have known for more than 20 years. He has a wonderful family: a young and beautiful wife and three lovely children of ages 6, 4 and 2. he is in the final stage of liver cancer and counts each day on this earth surrounded by his family members and friends. I could not read everything in my friend's mind, but in his pale face and tired eyes I could feel that his pain, sudden sadness and anxiety of a human being waiting for the end of his life seemed to be lessened through the comfort and gentle care of his friends and siblings who have gathered around him since they learned about his situation. In the spirit of today Gospel, God does send him friends and siblings as his shepherds. God always watches over us as good shepherd to his sheep. Our challenge is to hear his voice, to recognize and to follow him.

Last Easter, we celebrated the paschal mystery, the death and resurrection of the Lord. It is mysterious because we do not understand why God became human and suffered and died on the cross. Jesus Christ not only died to show us the way and the glory of the resurrection, but also to be sympathetic to our limited fate: that each and every human suffers! He became our good shepherd because he knows each of us by name and knows the way to lead us out of the rocky parts of lives.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 4: 8-12

1 John 3: 1-2

John 10: 11-18

April 29, 2012

# 靈 修 生 活

## 耶 穌 善 牧

張 春 申 神 父

我們知道四部福音都是耶穌基督復活升天以後寫成的。四聖史雖然記錄耶穌在世公開生活時的言行，但是早把教會對於基督死後復活的信仰表達在著作中間。這種現象在三部對照福音裏，不難可以指出；不過若望福音更加明顯。我們今天所讀的善牧比喻簡直好似復活的基督直接在向大家講解自己苦難與光榮的意義。其實，除非這樣解釋，我們反而不能深入福音的精義。事實上，比喻中非常清楚指出這個思想，因為耶穌自己說：父愛我，因為我捨掉我的性命，為再取回它來，這是關於死亡與復活的奧跡。

為基督信徒而論，耶穌的死亡與復活是救援的來源。不過所謂救援包括的內容非常豐富，聖經中有着好多不同的講解方式；至於若望福音，它應用的是一種特殊親密的方式。教會在復活期內便是採用若望福音，引領我們體驗耶穌復活賦與人類的新生命。

首先，善牧比喻已經表示耶穌與人類的親密關係，當然現代人不易體驗到二千年前，巴勒斯坦的牧人牧羊的情況。一個牧人在小小羊群中，真是一個美麗動人的圖畫，他撫摸、照顧、醫治，肩負自己的羊。他給每隻羊起了一個暱名，他叫喚，他認識自己的羊。另一方面，羊群也認識自己的牧人，分辨得出他的聲音。耶穌應用這幅圖畫，表達出祂和人類的親密關係。即使我們今天親眼見不到牧人和羊群的鏡頭，但通過善牧比喻，不難想起耶穌在公開生活中怎樣親密地接近四周的人。祂宣講治病，忙得連吃飯的工夫也沒有。祂在荒野，面對群眾便動了憐憫的心，因為他們好像無牧之羊；祂在喪失獨生子的寡婦之前，悲從中來，於是復活了那個年輕人。祂自己在飢渴交加時，還熱切地向一個婦女講道。總之，這一切正是顯出耶穌是善牧。祂曾經講過另一個善牧尋找亡羊的比喻，祂便是找着了羊，放在自己肩膀上喜歡地回家的牧人，祂在三年傳教生活中如此，現在進入光榮中更是如此。祂自己在最後晚餐時向宗徒說：「我必不留下你們為孤兒；我要回到你們這裡來。」如果祂在世時如同一個善牧為羊捨掉了性命，那麼在光榮中，祂將怎樣保護我們呢？

善牧比喻的確非常美麗，它通傳我們一種感覺，復活的基督這樣親密地與我們長相左右。不過信仰常是引領到最深的根源，發現救援的基礎是永遠的天父。耶穌基督與人類的親密關係，是自天父那裡領受的。祂說：「我是善牧，我認識我的羊，我的羊也認識我，正如父認識我，我也認識父一樣。」這句話裏的「認識」二字，中譯文並不立刻使我們懂悟聖經原文的意義，因為中文「認識」二字似乎只表示二者之間，在感覺與頭腦中的聯繫，但是聖經裏的「認識」遠超過這種聯繫，而是雙方心身方面的結合。如同天父和耶穌那樣親密結合，同樣耶穌與人類親密結合。最後，實在啟示了我們，天父把自己的生命通傳給了耶穌，所以二者之間的關係是這樣的親密結合；同樣耶穌把自己自聖父那裡領受的生命，通傳給了我們，所以祂和我們之間這樣的親密結合。祂是永遠的天主聖子，我們是分享祂的子性的天主的子女。這是若望在福音中再三肯定的天主救恩，也是基督死亡與復活為人類的意義。這是我們熟悉的道理，但善牧比喻却為我們增加一種非常親密的感受。

摘自「妙音送長風」

## 本 週 讀 經

二零一二年四月廿二九日

宗 4: 8-12 ; 若一 3: 1-2 ; 路 10: 11-18