

## **Bishop's Reflection – Good Shepherd Sunday**

I do not need to tell you the difference between a shepherd and a thief. It's not as if you don't already know it. The shepherd cares for the sheep; the thief only cares about him/herself. And, though we can spend a lot of time talking about the people whose primary concern is themselves, and we may have fallen prey to this mode of behaviour ourselves, I would like to focus on the "shepherds" in our lives and how they were reflections of the one true shepherd: Christ our Lord.

In talking about the "shepherds" in our lives, many of us might start with experiences of a parent, a teacher, a colleague or a close relative or friend. In doing so, we can see how Jesus has shared his role as "the one true shepherd" with a wide diversity of people. But, in this particular case, I would like to speak about a particular Bishop, for whom I worked prior to becoming a priest.

It was not in my plan to serve as a Director of Religious Education for the Diocese of Gravelbourg. If it wasn't for a series of setbacks in my life, it would never have happened. Looking back, I brought a lot of personal baggage into my new position. Most notably, my baggage in my dealings with the Church.

I am not sure what brought me to the Bishop's Office that day. I didn't have an appointment and only one minor issue of concern. But he asked me, "what's wrong?" and I am not sure either of us was ready for what came next. I spoke for two hours... and he listened. He didn't interrupt with explanations. He didn't try to defend the Church for what was done. He didn't try to minimize the extent of my pain or offer any quick answers. He just listened. He cared for the sheep... and he cared for me.

We see that quality in St. Peter in our First Reading. He just finished preaching his first sermon to the people of Jerusalem. Enflamed by the Holy Spirit and "cut to the heart", the people asked the apostles, "what should we do?" Considering the vulnerable position that the people were in, Peter could have easily directed them according to his own selfish purposes. Instead he speaks out of concern for them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children." He tells them "turn your lives to God." For it is only by turning to God that you will be able to participate fully in the gift of the Holy Spirit and the promises made to you and your children.

As we celebrate "Good Shepherd Sunday", a day when we reflect on the Call of God in our lives, we reflect on those who have served as "shepherds" on our spiritual journey and on how we are asked "to be shepherds" in our world today. How is it that our hearts have been stirred or moved by the example of Christ, God's Word, or the words or example of others? How have we been called to "turn our lives to God" or to share his love, healing, forgiveness or generosity with others? How is God calling you to share in the ministry of the Good Shepherd in your family, church and community today?