



Family Connections

4th Sunday of Easter (Year B)



John 10: 11-18

Jesus said: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

“For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”



Reflection:

Not everyone is a good leader. The good leaders are the ones who care and look after the people that they lead. The bad leader is the one who cares more about him/herself. What makes Jesus special is that he cares so much that he is willing to sacrifice his own life for us. It is for this reason that we follow him.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

“Do you know any good leaders (a teacher, a relative, a parent, a priest, a person in the community)? What makes them a good leader?”

The Parable of the Lost Sheep Retold (a bedtime story):

It wasn't the first time the sheep had wandered off. Distracted by a clump of pretty flowers, smelling the sweet waters of a brook nearby, whimsically following a butterfly that had sat on her nose, Ruth had wandered off many times before.

But something was different this time, almost alarming. Ruth had not just wandered off in pursuit of one thing or another, she had vanished into thin air, as if a wolf had snatched her away or a thief had stolen her from the flock.

"Sheep don't vanish into thin air," the shepherd said to himself. "And so there must be some explanation." Had he left her behind, at the beginning of the day, as he had done many years before, with one of his sheep, when he himself was but a young boy? "No," he said to himself, "that cannot be. I remember seeing her earlier, goofing around with her mate." The two had been so funny to watch.

"But will I leave my other sheep behind," the shepherd asked himself, "with only the dogs to protect them? What if a wolf or bear comes along? What a thief snatches one away?"

But the more he thought about it, the more he began to search, first in the bushes and thickets nearby, then gradually deeper into the underbrush and further away. It was as if, in pursuit of the one that was lost, he began to forget about the ninety-nine that he left behind.

His thoughts, too, became clouded with fear... fear not for himself but for his lost sheep. Thoughts of wolves and bears began to occupy his thoughts. So, too, the thought of what he would do, should he run into wild beasts of any kind. And his step grew more determined, his search more thorough. "I will find my sheep," he promised himself. "even if I must suffer death myself."

Far into the distance he could hear a faint sound. At first, it didn't sound like much at all. As he moved forward to investigate more closely, he distinctly heard the sound of his sheep.

How happy he was; his heart beat loud with joy. The shepherd began to run in the direction of the sound. Crashing through the thickets, breaking off branches as he went, the shepherd picked up speed at the sound of the bleating.

Finally, he broke through the last of the forest only to find his sheep in a trap. All bloodied himself, the shepherd quickly worked to release her, cutting himself badly in the process.

How delighted the sheep was to see him, and yet how fearful for having done wrong. Jumping and bleating at one moment, and drawing back the next, Ruth showed a wide variety of emotions, but most of all, joy, for having been found.

There were many bruises the shepherd had suffered, but little compared to the sufferings to come. For to save the flock, he would later die; to save the lost, he would surrender his life.

That night he threw a party. That night he invited all his friends. And, while they laughed and danced, he told his story, as Ruth lay cuddled up and bandaged asleep on a pillow.

Copy and paste the link below to your browser to watch a short video of the story.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyWZeOlaRo4&list=PLNjlsQWvYKygx73nJgJgd_ALsZ_K2-vXM&index=4

Closing note: Jesus told this story in order to tell us how much he loves us and in order to tell us how much he was willing to do for our sake. Each one of us is like little Ruth, prone to wander for many different reasons and, often, without notice. Let us thank God that we have a shepherd who cares for us and who is willing to suffer as much as he did.

Psalm 23 – The Lord is My Shepherd

(re-written for children)

The Lord is my shepherd, he looks after me.
In green fields, I eat and lie down;
By sparkling streams, He leads me to drink;
He brings joy to my soul.

Even in the darkness, you are with me;
You always stand at my side.
With your staff in hand, you look after me,
That is why I am not afraid.

Each day you set a table before me,
You bless my head with your holy oil.
My cup is always overflowing with your gifts,
Your goodness is known to me.

I know that you will always love me,
Until the very end of my life.
You will open the gates of your house to me,
When my days on this earth are complete.

The Lord is my shepherd, he looks after me.
In green fields, I eat and lie down;
By sparkling streams, he leads me to drink;
He brings joy to my soul.

Journal or Art Activity: Family members may be encouraged to write a brief response to God as the one who leads us always. This response can also be done through an art activity or through some other response.

Note to Parents:

Good Shepherd Sunday is a day set aside to reflect on God's Call in our lives. This is a wonderful opportunity to share your story with your children; it is also a good time to invite a Priest, Religious Sister, Missionary, Catechist or Involved Person in your Parish to your house (this can be done virtually, too) and share their faith story.



Here's a brief re-telling of my story (To read all 5 Connections visit www.rcchurch.com)

When I was a child, I never dreamt I would be a priest one day – let alone a Bishop. Though I loved God from an early age, I was hoping to serve him by donating the money I would make with writing books and making music, hoping to spend most of my fortune serving the poor and looking after those in need.

It was my brother who wanted to become a priest, ever since he was very young. And, since the two of us were very close in age, he spoke of it often when we were alone.

I never doubted for a moment that my brother would become a priest. He seemed to be so good at many of the things a priest did, much better than I, that is, because I couldn't speak in public, nor be so calm. I secretly admired him.

My brother never wavered all through high school; his plan was clear, his sight was set. That is, until the very last moment, when he entered the Science Program at U.B.C. instead.

This all happened the year I entered grade 12. Soon it would be my time to choose a path. Though Math and the Sciences were favourite topics of mine, the path not chosen by my brother began to preoccupy my thoughts and my prayers.

"Is it me you're calling?" I asked God. The idea seemed totally ludicrous to me. Aside from a knack to talk to God in my private prayer, there would be nothing that would suggest that I had any gifts to offer in becoming a priest.

"This might sound funny," I told my brother when he returned home for Christmas that year, "but I've been thinking about the priesthood, and I wonder what you think."

I was surprised no one objected. No one tried to talk me out of it. In fact, the more I thought about it, and the more I acted on it. The more I became convinced. During that Easter break, I travelled 1400 km to Edmonton to talk to the Oblates, then 900 km to speak to the Bishop of Nelson and another 1800 km to get home. By the time May came around I was applying at St. Pius X Seminary and registering for courses at the University of Saskatchewan.

I enjoyed my three years in Saskatoon and the friends I made along the way. Many of the seminarians were a lot like me. We played sports, we went to movies and we loved to have fun. What drew us together was a common question: "Was God calling me to become a Priest or not?" Some stayed, many did not. We all loved God; we just didn't know how to serve him. It would take me a total of 14 years to become a priest, seven more years than normal.

Vocation Prayer for Children:

Dear Jesus, friend of children, I come to you today;
I offer you my ears, my eyes, my heart,
I offer you my words, my deeds, my thoughts,
I offer you this prayer, this one request,
Show me the way to serve you best.