

Our Lady of Lourdes

April 25, 2010

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Readings:

Acts of the Apostles 13:14,43-52

Revelation 7:9, 14-17

John 10:27-30

Fr. Bob

The point of the shepherd analogy in the Gospels, of course, is about the importance of belonging. A sheep in those days is similar to the central role of any farm animal. Shepherds in Jesus' day belonged to nomadic tribes that moved with their small flock throughout Israel. Every sheep mattered. In their society every sheep was a vital economic unit. To lose one caused trouble not only to the individual, but also to the tribe. To lose a flock was financial ruin for a generation. As a result when Jesus invokes the image of the shepherd he draws attention to the intimate knowledge and care the shepherd has of them.

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that we follow him, not because we are too dumb to know otherwise, or because we are anxious or fearful of our alternatives, but because we know his voice, we know him, he knows our name. We follow Jesus' lead for no other reason than throughout our life we have come to trust him and to rely on the intimacy of our relationship with him. In return he protects us and makes sure no one can steal us from his flock.

The possibility of being stolen away from the Christian family is a real one. We know many people who, for a variety of reasons, have left the fold and been seduced into pursuing other leads. Whereas every Sunday we affirm that we cannot find a better way to live than following the Way, the Truth and the Life which is Christ present here and now. No one can suggest it is always easy to follow the Gospel and to stay with one another. Jesus was never under any illusions about what following his lead may cost, but he underlines how much we need each other to survive in this world.

In this Eucharist, then, let's steal a few moments to experience again the intimate love of the Risen Lord who knows, claims, and loves us. May we respond by following his lead by enfolding all our world in our care and welcoming all his children into his flock.