

Jesus Takes Care of Us



As we celebrate the Paschal season from Easter to Pentecost, we commemorate the great adventure of the Resurrection over a period of eight weeks. As we read about the Risen Lord, we gain a deeper understanding of his love for us. One of the most beautiful images we have of Christ is the shepherd, the *Good Shepherd*.

We often find this illustration in the Scriptures. Like a shepherd, God guided his people and led them out of slavery in Egypt. Through the patriarchs and prophets, he educated and instructed them. When the Bible speaks of God's Messenger – *the Messiah* – it often uses the image of the shepherd. The beautiful words at the beginning of Psalm 23 spring to mind: *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*

Jesus often used the Scriptures to reveal who he was. It was in this context that he presented himself as a *Shepherd*, the *Good Shepherd* when he related the parable of the lost sheep. What better example could he use to teach us about God's plan of salvation for his children? What better image could he use to explain God's unconditional and limitless love?

It is fascinating to learn about an early piece of Christian art that portrays Christ. It is not a portrait in the sense that we would expect today. This ancient interpretation, discovered in a Roman cemetery, is of a young shepherd carrying a lamb on his shoulders. We often find this image in the Gospels.

The reality is ***much more than an image***. When Jesus spoke of a shepherd, he spoke of someone who would give his life for his sheep. *My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.*

Though Jesus referred to himself as a shepherd who guided his sheep, he also emphasized our autonomy. We are never pressured to follow Christ. We can choose to listen to his voice: *My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me.*

As we contemplate Easter and the Risen Lord with the references to the *Good Shepherd*, it's important to remember what is behind this image however beautiful it may be. Today as always, God takes care of us as *a father cares for his children*.

Jacques Houle, c.s.v.

Translated by Honore Kerwin Borrelli

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