

Fourth Sunday of Easter: May 3, 2020

St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

Reflection on the Gospel

John 10:1-19

Probably none of us likes to be considered a sheep, yet the image Jesus uses is a powerful one. From the time I was a child, the image of God as shepherd has been significant to me. I have considered that image from many points of view over the years, but as I was reflecting on this week's reading, I had a different insight. This image speaks to us of relationship—a reciprocal relationship.

The shepherd has kept the sheep safe in the past and has interacted with them repeatedly. The shepherd has spent time speaking to them, providing guidance to them. They have listened to the shepherd's voice, have learned to recognize that voice, have responded to its direction. They recognize that person. They have learned, through experience, to trust that person. Probably not all the past experiences were easy, but they got through them with the shepherd's help and guidance. Thus their present trust. The shepherd expects that the sheep will respond to the known voice, will recognize it, and will follow it rather than an alien voice. This kind of relationship builds through time together, through experience of the company of the other.

In this troubled time, we are called more than ever to listen to the known voice that has led us so well in the past. We need to ignore the alien voices that want to steal us away into trouble. We need to believe that we may safely trust in the relationship that has kept us safe thus far. It is relationship with God that we have to nourish and build and trust. It doesn't just happen. Scripture, prayer, and Eucharist feed us so that we may faithfully respond to the shepherd's voice.

Peggy Shouse