

All Called to Be Shepherds Fourth Week in Ordinary Time Saturday, February 4, 2017
8:15 AM **Heb 13:15-17, 20-21; Psalm 23; Mk 6:30-34** (BVM) (Ultimately, Jesus idea was we all become one family, all people, and all people taking on responsibly for one another.)

“When Jesus disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.”

This is a very interesting and I think even profound image of people: like sheep without a shepherd. If we think about this, we will see how appropriate it is. **People are like sheep, not knowing how to protect themselves, how to prosper, how to find green pastures,** so to speak. The image of the shepherd is one of the approved images of God throughout the whole Old Testament. Witness the psalm we just recited, **“The Lord is my shepherd.”** In the first reading from Hebrews God is referred to as the great Shepherd of the sheep. Jesus himself referred to himself as the Good Shepherd. And David, who was the paragon of kingship in the Old Testament, was called the “shepherd.” So **this is a very important idea about God being the shepherd.** Ezekiel says that “I shall shepherd my sheep,” meaning that the human kings were not doing a very good job, so God would do it himself.

Now the point that we have to realize is that we are not created to be sheep. **We are created to be shepherds.** We are made in the image and likeness of God, and God is a shepherd, so we are all supposed to rise up, ideally, to that position of knowing what is best, of **knowing how to guide and guard and protect others as well as ourselves. Parents do this for their children,** and almost all parents have told me that they really grew up when they had kids. They really learned what it was to sacrifice, to work, to suffer, to hope, to trust when they had children. There is something to that.

But there are many people who do not actually rise up to this role, or if they do, only for a limited period of their lives, and they don't grow beyond it. They don't really become generative. They get stuck somewhere, and in their lives on a whole they don't really shepherd themselves or anyone else. They are like sheep without a shepherd. **They do not use reason.** Reason is a powerful faculty God has given us to help us understand and know what is right and what is good. And a lot of people don't use reason. My father recently said at dinner, "We are no longer living in a rational world." I am afraid it's true. If you look throughout the world, there are places where people are very desperate, and **when they are desperate they go to some shepherd that offers them some kind of help or salvation,** but very often is borderline mentally ill himself. How does Al Qaeda operate? **How do any of these fanatical groups work? Because sheep are looking for a shepherd.** I'm afraid it isn't limited to the Middle East, this sheep looking for shepherds. We all have to be wary because **we are all called to be pastors, shepherds, not only of our own children, but of people.** Jesus never restricted responsibility to one's own little family. His perspective was much broader. **Ultimately, Jesus' idea was we all become one family, all people, and all people taking on responsibly for one another.** This is the call to follow. It is not easy, but it is something we have to keep working on.