

## Homily 4 Easter C 2019 Mother's Day

Have you ever had the experience of listening to someone talk and the speaker was more interested in impressing you with his education than in communicating a message? I really dislike it when someone is talking above me and I have a problem understanding what what is being talking about.

If there is anything you could say about Jesus it is that he did not want to impress anyone with his knowledge. Jesus wanted to get a message out about God and so he used the simplest, clearest examples possible. Jesus used images and examples everyone could relate to. In his day everyone and I mean everyone whether you were born in Spain or Greece or Rome or Egypt or Israel—everyone knew what shepherds were because shepherds were everywhere. This is why Jesus used the image of shepherds to teach something about God. And everyone had a mother too so Jesus used the image of a mother to teach us something about God.

Jesus came to earth because he wanted us to come to know the Father. Jesus wanted for us to make a connection with God. Jesus wanted us to have a relationship with God. He would teach us to connect to God by allowing us to connect to him. Jesus and the Father are one and the same. We just heard him say in the Gospel “The Father and I are one.”

Shepherds and Mothers have a great deal in common. Both shepherds and mothers are responsible for feeding their sheep. When you were folded into your mother's arms she took on the 24-7 job of making sure you were fed. If the baby cries at one o'clock in the morning or one o'clock in the afternoon most mothers try feeding their child. A parent does not get a single day off once a child is entrusted to their care. Do all mothers feed their children? On April 30<sup>th</sup>, less than two weeks ago, Tiffany Moss was sentenced to death by lethal injection. Tiffany's ten year old step-daughter was 32 pounds when she died of starvation in Georgia. Ten years old. 32 pounds! No, all mothers do not feed their children. And-- if you have traveled around and attended a lot of different churches you know that all shepherds do not feed their parishioners either. But God does feed us. God watches over us. God is closer to us than our mother.

God does not want to be worshiped. God wants to be loved. God wants a relationship with each of us.

Listen to this passage from Isaiah 40:11 “Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.”

God is like a mother. But God can be much closer to each of us than any mother could be. God can do more than touch the outside of a person. God can touch the inside of a person, the soul.

Isaiah 49:15-16 “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name. . .”

Don't you absolutely love this passage from Isaiah? God is speaking directly to each and every one of us here at this moment. He says: “I will never forget YOU. See, upon the palms of my hands I have written YOUR name.” A piece of who you are is carved into God's very being.

Most Protestants and Catholics call their ministers and priests “pastor”. Pastor means “the one who feeds.”

Jesus was our pastor. Jesus fed us not only with the loaves and the fishes, but Jesus feeds us today, at this mass, with his body and blood.

Shouldn't we be grateful? Grateful to God. God is feeding us here today at mass. Imagine a mother somewhere this Mother's Day weekend who prepares a wonderful meal expecting her four adult children to visit with her grandchildren. On Friday she makes homemade pierogi. It takes the whole day because there has to be enough for everyone to take some home. She gets up Saturday morning to bake a special cake, but she has to make a special pie too because one daughter does not like cake. The weekend passes. No one visits. How does the mother feel? Angry? No! She feels sad, disvalued, forgotten.

God has prepared a feast at church this weekend. It is better than pierogi or pie. He puts his body and soul into this meal. God offers this meal every weekend. How does God feel when some people never show up? Angry? I don't think so. What does it say about our gratitude?

“I am the Good Shepherd,” Jesus says. “Good” communicates something about God's kindness and sympathy and graciousness. It is not in his nature to harm but rather to love, to love us even more than we could possibly love ourselves, to desire to care for us in kind and gentle ways.

“I am the Good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.” (John 10:14). He says that he knows all of us by name. What a wonderful word for those of us who live in such an impersonal age. Sometimes we begin to feel as though we are merely numbers on somebody's gigantic computer. But Jesus says that he knows all of us by name. People feel lost today, forgotten, worthless, useless. Think how the truth of this teaching could sustain your children in the years to come when they are tempted to suicide. Think how the truth of Jesus's teaching could lift your children up in the years to come when they find themselves beaten down and alone and you are no longer there to help them. God knows you by name. God knew you before you were born.

The Good Shepherd promises to keep His sheep. This does not mean that they will never encounter any problems. It does mean that they need never face any problems alone. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm does not promise us that we will never have to go through “the valley of the shadow” but it does promise us that no one need make that journey alone. “Thou art with me.” Faith is not a means of avoiding the difficult times of life, but rather a means of facing them head-on and winning victory over them because we do not face them alone. **The power behind us is greater than the problems before us.** (<https://sermons.com/sermon/so-who-needs-a-shepherd/1348752>)

The Good Shepherd goes after His sheep when they get lost. People think of God as walking away from people when they reject him, walking away when they commit some terrible sin, walking away when their hearts become cold and unforgiving. This image of God does not fit with the story Jesus told about the shepherd who leaves the 99 sheep to go out and search for the one that is lost.

Francis Thompson had a drug habit. He was reduced to living off the income of prostitutes to support his drug habit. You can't get much lower than this. God never gave up on Francis Thompson after everyone else did give up on him. God did not give up on Francis Thompson when Francis Thompson gave up on himself. In the depths of his darkness and despair, God came to him and touched his heart. If you don't know it Francis Thompson is the author of that world famous poem called "The Hound of Heaven." **God is not seeking to inhibit our lives, but to inhabit them**, so that we might truly have life. Life here is capitalized. Life abundant. Life eternal. (<https://sermons.com/sermon/so-who-needs-a-shepherd/1348752>)

What is it that I am trying to get at today?  
God came to us in the person of His Son, Jesus.  
God came to us for a reason.

God is calling you by name.  
Open the door to your heart.  
Let Him enter. Give Him permission to love you.