

## Fourth Sunday of Easter A “Good Shepherds”

Fr. Frank Schuster

Have any of you been around a sheep? Anybody who has been around a sheep will tell you that they are heavy, awkward, slightly stupid, and typically, sheep smell bad.

It is not a very attractive picture is it. Who wants to be a sheep? Raise your hand!

What I find attractive about this analogy Jesus give us is the fact I know that in my life, there are things that are heavy, awkward, slightly stupid, and, sometimes, smell bad.

What does Jesus do with sheep that are heavy, awkward, stupid and smelly? Jesus, the good Shepherd, takes that smelly sheep and places it over his shoulders and leads the sheep to safety.

Jesus is the sheep gate who calls his sheep to the safety and healing of his presence.

My friends, what are the areas of our lives that are heavy, awkward, stupid and smelly? Can you allow Jesus to be your good shepherd? Can you hear Jesus’ voice calling you to the safety and healing of his presence? I would like to share a couple good shepherd stories.

My pastor growing up, Fr. Chuck Palluck, is a very joyful and happy priest. Although he dressed rather flamboyantly, he wore about 20 earrings, he always worked hard on his homilies and cared deeply about the people he ministered to. His joy and good sense of humor gave me the impression being a priest was fun. And being a priest is a lot of fun. Fr. Chuck is a good shepherd and one of the reasons why I am a priest today. I am never going to wear an earring.

My great grand uncle, the late bishop Eldon Schuster, celebrated mass every time he came to visit at our house. He always had a holy card or a rosary to give me. He always had the time to talk with his nieces and nephews. He helped my sister and me with our college expenses. Indeed, he lived a very humble life so that he could spend his money helping others. My grand uncle was a good shepherd and a big reason why I am a priest today.

Both of my parents were good shepherds. My whole life, they placed their marriage and the wellbeing of their kids as the first priority in life. As educators, they had the ability to take our whole family on vacation during the month of July. And we would spend this time camping as a family. No TVs, just campfires after a long day of hiking or sightseeing. When it came time for me to make a decision to go to seminary, my parents were very supportive. They said, whether you are the father of our grandchildren or father of millions, we will always support you son. My mom and dad were good shepherds and the biggest reason why I was able to say yes to God and become a priest.

My friends, we all have good shepherds in our lives. We all have parents, teachers, priests, ministers, and coaches who were very influential in helping us become the people we are today. All these people reflect Jesus who is the good shepherd who gently guides us toward who we are supposed to be, regardless of those times when we are awkward, stupid or smelly.

My friends, there are dark times when the world is scary around us. There are times more than ever when we need the comfort of a Good Shepherd. We need to be embraced by a good and gracious God who alone can guide us when blue skies turn gray.

My friends, now more than ever we need good shepherds in our lives! Who are they? Who are the good shepherds in our lives? Can you hear the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gently guiding us each and every day to become better people and better shepherds to the souls we have care of. We turn now toward the table, where Christ, our Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God, nourishes us with his own body, blood, soul and divinity, forming us into his image, transforming us into good shepherds to the people in our lives.