**4th Sunday of Easter, Cycle. C. 2025.**

Few months back I had gone to Walmart to buy some Grocery items. I picked up few items and had kept in the cart and then looking at the vegetable items on the Isle**.** But when I turned back, my cart was taken by someone else..I searched nearby places, could not find out..asked some people..but nobody knows anything about it..…fortunately I had not gone to the Counter and paid for it. Hence I did not lose anything. So far so good**..Purse (Valet) snatching is NOT uncommon** these days on subways, shopping malls and areas where crowds gather. Jesus speaks in **today’s Gospel Reading about sheep-snatchers who would steal the sheep given Him by the Father**. We all know that the flock has to face **winters, rain, disease, predators and wolv**es. For all that they need is a really Good Shepherd to protect the sheep so that the flock will stay together.

We also know that the **real human situation where we live is a world of imperfect relationships, emotional crises, great benevolence and lots of crime, of truth and of half-truth**s. It is world of grace and sin, love and hate., and not a perfect one . In a world of so much debate and conflict with so many voices calling us, **we need a shepherd** and that **shepherd is the Lord Jes**us. We need to listen to Him and follow Him. **How do we do that?**

We **celebrated recently the Holy week and E**aster. The message of these celebrations reminds us that God really cares and that it makes a difference in our life. **Today’s Second Reading** shows that Christ did matter in the lives of numberless men and women from every nation and tribe. Because he brought peace, the gift of forgiveness for their sins; and God has wiped away every tear from their eyes. **This caring is beautifully expressed in the image of God as the Good Shepherd in the Gospel to**day. God cares for us even to the point of dying for us. Jesus says, “***I am the Good Shepherd, who is willing to die for His sheep.”***Jn. 10; 11). This is the Good News which has to be boldly proclaimed. The devil and his agents will try to oppose, to silence the messengers of Good News (First Reading). But no one can stop God or the spread of His word.

**Today Jesus tells us that He is the Good Shepherd who has come down to tend His flock**. A Shepherd is expected to lead his sheep to green pastures and cool streams where there is refreshment, rest and rock-like security. He knows how to protect his sheep from any dangers. He is even prepared to give up his life to safeguard His flock. But his efforts will be in vain if the sheep do not listen to his voice.

 **We follow the Shepherd by joining the flock of Christ not just in our minds but in a specific wa**y. It means belonging to a Parish, registering there, coming to mass there weekly, receiving the sacraments, supporting its activities, sharing its life, refreshing ourselves there in our Catholic faith and sharing that faith with others. This is the way we all get the foretaste of the Vi**sion of John as given** in the Second Reading today( Revelation)

**“My sheep hear my voice**”, says the Lord. “***I know them and they follow me”***. ***I give them eternal life and no one will snatch them out of my hand***”. Lots of things are ready to snatch us from the Lord, to kidnap us from Christ. There are hundreds of voices today calling to and for our soul. They will not go away any time soon.

In the ancient world, the sheep of a particular flock used to be branded for **easy identification and ownership**. Since, we being the sheep of Christ are marked in His Blood in a unique manner to show that we follow Jesus the Good Shepherd. The fact we often fail to follow Jesus is sign that we do not recognize His voice that we stray from the fold. Consequently, we shall not be led to green pastures where we find eternal life. Once we commit ourselves fully to follow our Shepherd and Guide, no power on earth will be able to hold us back.

**Being fully aware of the unending love and care of the Good Shepherd shown for His sheep**, let us pledge to hear His word of love and follow His path.