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| 4th Sunday of Easter |
| Acts 4:8-12 |
| 1 John 3:1-2 |
| John 10:11-18 |

**A. Text/Context**

* One of the most beautiful images of Jesus in Catholic devotions is Jesus depicted as the Good Shepherd or the Divine Shepherd or the Pastor Divino
* The basis for this devotion is really biblical and in the gospel today this title of Jesus as the Good Shepherd takes center stage here in the gospel of John
* During the time of Jesus the wealth or riches of an individual is measured according to their number of livestock
* How many heads of sheep, how many heads of goats, cattle or horses or swine would signify how rich or how poor you are at that time
* And being a shepherd is a very common profession or occupation
* The shepherd protects the sheep from all dangers: thieves, foxes, lions, and even bad weather
* The word shepherd means the political leaders or the spiritual leaders of their time and if they are not doing their job well they are called as the bad shepherds
* In the gospel today Jesus as the good shepherd is a contrast of the existing leadership
* Because at that time they do not care anymore about the situation of the people
* Jesus said that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his flock the bad shepherd will just run away in times of dangers
* And Jesus himself said I am the Good Shepherd and therefore Jesus is the good shepherd and we are his sheep or his flock
* And he added further that I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold and they will also hear my voice

**B. Human Situation**

* One of the most painful reality for us Christians is that we are not really united
* Even though we are under one shepherd which is the Church we are still divided
* In Christianity, we have Catholics and Protestants, and Coptic Christians. And as Catholics we are divided further: Roman Catholics, Greek and Russian Catholics or Greek and Russian Orthodox
* For the Protestants, the denominations are even more numerous and that includes the Lutherans and the Anglicans with the same devotion to Mary but they are Protestants
* The reasons why we are divided: disobedience, pride, rejection and discrimination, and many other reasons
* That would confirm what Jesus said I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. We are utterly divided when we are supposed to be one
* Working as a shepherd is not considered a noble profession in Jesus time.
* Shepherds are being discriminated upon and considered as dirty or ritually unclean because they come into contact with animal wastes
* In the first reading we see rejection and discrimination. But Jesus as the stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone
* Jesus is the head of the one big church so that in the 2nd reading we are all called children of God
* It is really rejection and discrimination that has divided us apart from each other but Jesus is the uniting factor
* There is a social stratum dividing the rich from the middle class, the average, the poor, and the very poor
* But if we talk of virtues and values it applies to all
* A very wealthy businessman can still have time to take care for the welfare of his workers by giving them a just compensation for their work
* A dignified and high profiled socialite can still work for her charity projects for the less fortunate
* And the same thing a very poor laborer can also contribute a little from his earnings no matter how small it is
* As the poor man will not curse the rich people because they are so wealthy and so envious why they are rich and they are so poor
* Rich or poor, the same thing is required we need to be charitable according to our capacity
* I have met people who are so rich yet they are so kind and I can see how they treat their maids and their drivers kindly
* I have also met very poor people and some of them are so arrogant even in their poverty
* It is really a matter of virtues and values. It is a matter of being humble. It is not a matter of economic status

**C. Challenge**

* The challenge for all of us is to become good shepherds no matter what social positions do we belong. We should not discriminate
* Primarily, shepherding is really leadership. We can become good shepherds right from where we are. As leaders we are tasked to render service according to the duties of our office or positions in this hospital
* And apparently, not everybody can become leaders, then the majority of us should become good followers
* So there is now a good harmony between the shepherd and the flock
* It is not good for a leader to be only good in actions as it is not also good for a follower to keep on criticizing without lifting a finger by even suggesting what to do
* As Jesus has laid down his life for his sheep, we Christians are also required to give our best in service to others whether we are a leader or a follower
* As the whole world braces itself from the effects of global pandemic with people losing their jobs and getting desperate
* A lot of people go desperate and hysterical in times of crisis if there are no good shepherds or good leaders prophetic enough to contain a problem
* Now we have a global pandemic. What role do we have to exert as good shepherds?
* Rumor mongers have no place in a pandemic. We need facts in order to act about the problem. And there are proper authorities who can tackle the problem
* One false alarm spread by an irresponsible person could send the whole population into panic
* In times of crisis we are all expected to be in utmost vigilance and we must all be utterly responsible in everything that we act or do
* That will be our role as a good shepherd, as a good leader, as responsible citizens in our own locality as we face this global pandemic