

**GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY (Fourth Sunday Of Easter) – YEAR B**  
**Acts 4:8-12; Psalm118:1&5-9.21-23.26 & 28-29; 1John.3:1-2; John10:11-18**

**THE SERVICES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

*“Happy the missionaries who will persevere in the service that is so hard for them but so profitable for the neighbour.”  
St. Vincent de Paul, IV: 80*

Many years ago, one of the lions escaped from the zoo. Immediately, the lion ran towards some students who were having lectures. Frantically, every one of them started running; however, the lecturer, Prof. Pilar was so brave that, he took on the lion in a ‘physical combat.’ As they were fighting, one of the security men hurriedly shot the lion and it died. Hence, Prof. Pilar was delivered from the jaws and claws of the lion.

By this time, the lion had wounded part of his left arm and blood was gushing out. Immediately, he was rushed to the hospital where they amputated his left arm. However, the entire school and many organisations celebrated him as a hero. Meanwhile, the government paid his hospital bill and honoured him with the award of ‘**the most loving teacher**’ who was able to lay down his life for his students.

My dear brothers and sisters, as we celebrate today the Good Shepherd Sunday, the above story is reminiscent of Jesus Christ, who says, “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (Jn.10:11). Jesus did this for us because he loves and cares for us intimately and selflessly. In other words, Jesus rendered his service of love selflessly through his passion, death and resurrection. Moreover, he constantly protects and provides for us.

Just like the regular shepherds provide food, water and shelter to their sheep; and also spend time with them, care for them and protect them when they are in trouble. Similarly, Prof. Pilar did the same in the story, when he fought the lion that was an imminent danger to his students. Hence, the salvific work of Jesus Christ made Peter in the first reading state that, “There is no other name by which we are saved.” (Acts 4:12) because a name depicts its character.

Thus, Jesus Christ said, “I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me.” (Jn.10:14). This means that Jesus Christ knows each of us by name (Is. 43:1); our past, our present and, our future (Heb.14:12); and our strengths and weaknesses (Rev.3:8). And he understands. Now, those who know him are those who believe and obey him, as he said, “...whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.” (Jn.14:21)

Moreover, he says, “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice.” (Jn.10:16). The Jews believed that they were God's chosen people and that God had no use for any other nation. Some Christians may fall into such temptation. However, before claiming all privileges to yourself ask yourself, do you heed his voice? (Jn.14:23-24). This is because it is the criterion for belonging to his sheepfold.

In gratitude to Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd we are called to serve one another selflessly. Therefore, every position of responsibility is an opportunity to be a good shepherd. As the Pope, bishop, priest, superior, catechist, leader of any group, engineer, lecturer, doctor, nurse, teacher, father, mother, elderly brother or sister, proprietor, minister, manager, etc. you are a shepherd. And you are called to serve others by prioritizing their welfare above yours.

Jesus is our best friend because he is the Good Shepherd, to be a good shepherd be a true friend to all you are serving.

Unlike Jesus who, based on his selflessness, sacrificed his life for us, the hireling is selfish. His interest is in what he can gain. Any person who prioritises money above his service is like a hireling. Where do you belong? Today is a special day in which we are called to pray for more vocations to the priesthood and the religious life and that God may continue to nurture and sustain them towards being good shepherds.

Grant that in gratitude for the sacrifices of Jesus, the Good Shepherd we may be Good Shepherds to one another, Amen.

**HAPPY GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY**

**Nicholas Ikpeme, CM**

**Witnesses’ Homilies (Mt.10:32)**