

Dunleer Parish Bulletin

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Sat April 24 th 7 30	Jim Harmon James and Agnes Harmon. Johnny Brennan Patrick O Connor Jamie Kirwan John, Helena and Brendan Duffy Cissie Duffy 1 st Av
Sun Apr 25 th 11 30	Lal Callan David Flynn Ron and Eileen Kerr Kitty Hanratty Ben and Teasia Mc Cann and dec'd. Michael and Kathleen Woods B.Rem Bartle Woods
Sat May 1 st 7 30 Av	Paddy and Rosie Lane Matthew and Mary Matthews John, Matthew, Séan and Carmel Flood.
Sun May 2 nd 11 30 Av	M Mind Brigid Larkin. Paddy and Maura McGrory Nicky and Maureen Cunningham Séan and Monica Hand.

One of Christ's greatest teaching gifts was his use of images from the environment in which people lived and worked. Herding was is one of the daily chores of many people in the Holy Land. Looking over the old death registers of our own parish, it is not uncommon to find someone described as having been 'a herd'. Shepherds, leading their flock through the dusty desert countryside, from pasture to water to shelter, were not and still are not a high profile group. In Christ's time, they were not regarded as dubious characters, low life, and shifty. Their profession of herd or shepherd was given some dignity by being the first guests of the infant Jesus in the crib. It was their only claim to fame.

Jesus chose the image of shepherd to describe his own role and the role of those who would follow him in ministering to God's people. He draws a picture of the Good Shepherd as one with knowledge of his flock, with an interest in their welfare, and with a love for them which is shown in his willingness to literally pour out his life in service, to lay down his life for his sheep. The Good Shepherd is not just efficient, he is good. His flock know and listen, in response to this goodness.

This image is sharply contrasted with the hireling, who is motivated by his wage and while he might be efficient, has no real love for the sheep. He looks after himself first, and rather than laying down his life for his sheep, seeks rather to save his own skin first. The result is a scattered sheep and an absent shepherd.

The care of the Good Shepherd is not confined to his own sheep. There are others, always, whom he seeks to lead and protect and care for, as well. The flock is always in danger too, from inside and outside. Some of the flock can be very exclusive, not wanting or allowing others to join in. Others of the flock can be proud and prefer to live, cut off from the flock, claiming to fare just as well, to live even better maybe, without being part of the flock.

We have a duty to fulfil the roles of shepherd and sheep in our lives, to be good and caring leaders, and to serve those in our care. We have a duty, after the example of Christ, to know his voice and to listen and know the voice of those whose welfare depends on us. We have a duty to allow ourselves to be led, by those we judge as good and wise and caring. We are not only safer within the flock, we need each other, and we learn from each other, and we find nourishment together, in communion. We believe in the communion of saints, the great flocking of those redeemed from death, shepherded by Christ into the promised land, the pastures of eternal life. The love of the father for the son is passed on by the son to his people as he gathers in the scattered people of God. Obedient to the father's command, the good shepherd works to gather all into unity, into one flock, acknowledging one voice, living in service of one another. Allow yourself to be led, by the son of the father, by the shepherd who is good.

