

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Year B

Acts 4:8-12

Ps 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29

I Jn 3:1-2

Jn 10:11-18

George R. Morgan, O.S.A.

The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. These metaphoric references about God and about us bring us poetically closer to an awareness of the wonderful humility of our God, a concept less understood from words than it is from our experience of it.

Letting go completely of heaven, God allows God to be enclosed in the defenseless and precious body of a baby, born in a stable, reared in a backwater village and, though trained as a carpenter, becomes instead an itinerant preacher drawing inspiration from the writings of the Prophets which he heard as a boy in synagogue school. There was nothing of a king or conqueror about him, yet there was everything of a lover about him. He cared for the sick and the sick of heart, the dying and those whose hearts were not life giving. His preaching was more than words. Hope, sometimes a whisper, sometimes a force, began to charge the atmosphere. They tried to raise him up to be king and he wouldn't have it. They turned on him and he knew it was time. Only he could finally seal the Covenant between God and us and gain eternal redemption for all of us with the total sacrifice of his human person, and he did. But that is not the end of the story.

After the Resurrection and the gaining of Eternal Salvation for all of us, there were those who wondered why he didn't remove all *our* crosses. He didn't remove them, he *joined* us on each one of them. And when we allow ourselves to be open to his presence, we share in the same sheer-grit-pure-love that enabled him to get up every time he fell, to move on and accomplish our Redemption. When we fall because of our own sin or because of the sins of others, he is there with us. When we fall because of our own greed and self-centeredness or because of the greed and self-centeredness of others, he is there with us. And when we too get up -with his company- from our "fall", we once again in our vulnerability release from within us the forgiveness and love of God into the world. In company with Jesus we further and further bring the whole world more deeply into the Redemption Jesus won for us all.

Such is the Good Shepherd. Less "known" as a king. More readily "known" as a lover. A love that can turn all of creation into new life.