



Balta Lelija

4. November 2022

The Good Shepherd and His Own

Jn 10:11-18

A reading for the memorial of St. Charles Borromeo

Jesus said at that time, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and I must lead these too. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as I have power to lay it down, so I have power to take it up again; and this is the command I have received from my Father".

While it is true that we must cooperate with God's grace, our part will always be the lesser. For what would become of the sheep without the Good Shepherd? They would fall prey to the wolves, because they are inferior to them and do not have the same means to defend themselves against those who attack them. The sheep do not disguise themselves!

But they have the Good Shepherd, who does not leave their side and under whose protection they always remain! This is because the Lamb's retinue - those whom He calls "mine" - belong to God in love. They have given their whole life to Him, because they know the heart of their Lord. They belong to God, not in the sense of an earthly possession, which they can dispose of as they wish, but in the sense of full trust and absolute readiness to fulfill the Will of the Father. And God takes care to make them worthy of His love!

Surrender to God is the response that His grace produces in us. The Holy Spirit reveals to us more and more of God's love, making it clear to us and permeating us with it. Who could resist this love when it knocks at our door and manifests itself to us?

Our Shepherd - and also every good shepherd who follows His example - lays down His life for His sheep. We are more important to Him than His own life! If anyone would come against us, they come against His heart, His love... He confronts the wolf and drives him away, and prefers to let Himself be killed rather than give up the protection of His sheep.

The Lord recognizes the wolf who wants to tear us to pieces, scatter us, and then kill us. Likewise, every good shepherd should recognize the wolves. However, sometimes wolves disguise themselves as sheep or, in the worst cases, even pass themselves off as shepherds. Here a special gift of discernment of spirits is needed, to distinguish light from darkness.

Let us remember how clearly the Lord rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees of his time, calling them "blind guides of the blind" (cf. Mt 15:14). They were the religious leaders of the People and yet they closed off access to the Kingdom of God:

"Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut up the kingdom of Heaven in people's faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go who want to" (Mt 23:13).

We too, at this time, urgently need the Good Shepherd; Jesus himself, who protects his own from confusion and wolves.

In these times of crisis not yet overcome, we need clear orientation and guidance. God has allowed the so-called "pandemic" to call both the world and the Church to conversion. It is a rebuke, and is therefore an indication from God to turn us back to the right path or to find it.

For this reason, we can only listen to those voices that clearly point out this link and exhort us to take the corresponding steps. Everything else only generates fog, which can be used by the wolves to continue working and scattering the flock, undetected.

The world must cease to attack the commandments of God. The Church, for its part, must fulfill its mission of announcing Jesus unreservedly to all nations, as the only Savior of mankind, and thus lead men to the true worship of God, without idolatry or mongrelization. If it does not do so and merges with the world, it will become more and more a worldly institution. And this, in turn, could easily become a puppet of the anti-Christian powers, and thus spoil the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us not be deceived by anyone! The Word of God is clear, as is the doctrine and Tradition of the Church.

The other sheep who are not of this fold, whom the Lord also wants to guide and who listen to his voice, are waiting for this authentic proclamation. This proclamation must be plain, so that people may receive "clear waters" from the Throne of the Lamb (cf. Rev 22:1), and thus be led to those pastures where the Good Shepherd nourishes and protects them.

Better a little flock "that follows the Lamb wherever he goes" (Rev 14:4), than a Church that gets involved with the world and loses its spiritual strength.