

## **Homily- John 10:11-18**

### **Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year B**

24<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup> April 2021, Sooeey

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“I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me”.

We are on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter known as the Good Shepherd Sunday. And it is also the World day of prayer for vocations.

A few years ago, I happened to come across a touching incident that took place in Chicago on the South Shore in the year 1987. There was a family, the Donnelly family and on that particular night when this took place, Mrs. Donnelly was with her sister who just had a baby. Mr. Tom Donnelly and his 5 year old daughter Millie were still at home.

At about 4.30 in the morning, Tom woke up and realized that the apartment building was on fire. He probably at that point could still have got out of the building. But Tom knew that his little daughter was in her bed room, and he could hear her screaming. Tom had to run through the fire to get there. He opened the door and Millie was hiding under a blanket. He got her out and just about that time, part of the ceiling behind

him collapsed on the floor, totally cutting off any way for him to escape.

However, Mr. Donnelly managed to reach near the window, and he threw it open. And then Tom tells his little angel: “Don’t be afraid my princess. It is okay. I am here with you. I won’t let you fall”. Now, this is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. And he sees the fire truck coming in. And holding her tight, he keeps telling her: “Millie! Don’t be scared. I have got you. You are alright”.

And as he is saying this, the fire is beginning to burn up the back of his leg. But he continues to hold her in spite of the agony he was going through until the fireman gets the safety net underneath her. And then he tells her: “My little child, you are going to be okay”. And now, he lets her go and she falls into the net and is saved. And there, Tom collapses on the floor and dies.

Tom Donnelly’s love for his daughter was not only greater than his love for his own life, but it was so great that he was willing to endure unendurable pain to keep her safe. And that is exactly what Jesus is talking about, when he says: “I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me.”

Well, Jesus our Good Shepherd loves each and every one of us: He loves you and me so much that He is

willing to endure unimaginable, unspeakable pain for us. He is willing to give everything for us. He lays down his life for us. And he doesn't abandon any of his sheep even when we tend to drift away from Him.

Pope Francis while visiting St. Paul of the Cross Church in Rome on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 had an emotional encounter with the children of the Parish. Now, it was the turn of Emmanuele, a young boy who had lost his dad. And the young boy with tears rolling down his cheeks, got near to the Holy Father and quietly asked him the following: "My father died a short time ago. He was a nonbeliever, but he had all four of his children baptized. He was a good man. Is my dad in heaven?"

With Emanuele's permission, Pope Francis discloses this question of the little boy to the public, and then he asks the children gathered there yet another question. Does God who has a father's heart, a dad's heart abandon His children? "Does God abandon His children when they are good?" And to the question of the Pope, all of them shouted: "No". "There, Emanuele, that is the answer," the Pope told the boy. And he said: "God surely was proud of your father, who baptized all his children even as a nonbeliever. Surely this pleased God very much."

Yes! Jesus the Good Shepherd never abandons His sheep. He looks out for ways and means to get them back to His side.

But then, what is our responsibility? Well! We are called to be in tune with the Lord, to get closer to the Lord. St. James in his epistle Chapter 4, verse 8 would say: “Draw near to God and God will draw near to you”.

A story is told of a string ensemble, not of professionals. But they were rehearsing for a concert in a neighbourhood Church. The programme called for a wonderful piece with an Oboe. The Oboe was not the normal part of the ensemble (ʋn'sɔmb(ə)l). And during the rehearsal, it was evident that something was wrong. The leader of the ensemble insisted that the oboe is out of tune. The musician adjusted the reed and the oboe, and they tried the piece again and still not a very pleasant sound. After a few adjustments the piece didn't still sound right and the leader was suggesting that they drop it.

And at that, an elderly gentleman came from the back of the Church and politely said to the leader: “Forgive me for intruding. But doesn't the Orchestra tune itself to the Oboe?” And that is the truth.

The oboe is the foundational note and all the others are to tune their instruments to be in tune with the Oboe. The members of the ensemble were dumbfounded. Actually, they had ignored this basic performance' principle. All the other instruments were in tune with each other. But they were out of tune with the oboe. And once they adjusted, the piece went flawlessly.

Well dear friends! The Shepherd calls each of us by name. And we are urged to listen to the Shepherd's voice. But then, we need to realize that Christ is the foundational note. Even if, you and I are, in tune with each other but not in tune with the Oboe the Christ, we are really out of tune.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday and on this world day of prayer for Vocations, let us pray for an increase in vocations to the Priesthood, Religious life, Permanent Diaconate, lay Ministries and Marriage.

And, in any state of life, remember dear friends, 'like the Oboe', it is Christ who gives us the perfect pitch. It is Christ that is the standard by which we are to measure our lives. Let us then, listen to His voice and live our lives accordingly.

God bless you all, **Amen.**

