



Jesus - The Good Shepherd

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand... catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf.... I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know my Father; for these sheep I will give my life. John 10:11-12, 14-15

In biblical times, shepherding was often delegated to the youngest child, who had to lead the sheep to food and water, name and count them, separate them, find them when they strayed, help them with difficult deliveries, and protect them from predators. Jesus says He is the Good Shepherd. He not only gave His life for us, but He continues to shepherd us today.

A shepherd was responsible for keeping his sheep safe; not just from predators, but from wandering off or getting lost. During the day, the sheep grazed in the pastures. But when nightfall came, the sheep were gathered into a pen, if available; or if not, into a tight gathering with the other sheep. Jesus allows us the freewill to go out into the world, but is always looking after us to be sure we don't go too far or get lost. He instructs us to be a part of a Christian community which keeps us from going astray. It's the sheep who wanders off by him or herself that is more vulnerable to attack or to getting lost.

The good shepherd leads his sheep to food and water; he cares for their physical needs. Our Good Shepherd provides food for our bodies as well as food for our souls. He provides for all of our needs, as he knows we are mortal as well as spiritual beings.

The good shepherd names and counts his sheep. Our Good Shepherd knows each of us by name; we are never just one face in the crowd. Our name makes us special and individual. He counts each of his sheep, as each one is a valuable part of His flock.

The good shepherd separates his sheep. He pairs the weak with the strong so the strong will look after the weak and help them along. Our Good Shepherd leads us to people and groups who will help us to grow and develop into the person we were meant to be.

The good shepherd goes after every stray sheep and leads them back to the flock. Our Good Shepherd pursues us relentlessly if we wander away from His Church or His teachings. He is never very far from any of those who are part of His flock. He does not give up until they return. The good shepherd helps his sheep with difficult deliveries. Our Good Shepherd helps us in the many and varied tasks we are called to do. He gives us all the gifts we need and the grace to carry out all our work and responsibilities. There is no assignment given to us that He does not equip us to accomplish.

So let us thank Jesus for being our Good Shepherd and remember that He is always watching over us.



Kathy Nowak-(on the right) is a cradle Catholic who has been ministering in the Church in many areas since she received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit in 1975. Before the churches were shut down, she helped facilitate the Evening Bible Study group at the Church of Epiphany in Brick and served as a prayer group leader for JOY Prayer Group. She is also a member of Light of Life Prayer Group at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Toms River. She and her husband, Deacon Ron Nowak, are the parents of four children and are blessed with nine grandchildren. You can read more of her writing at www.pathwaypeace.blogspot.com.