

Reflections on Fourth Sunday of Easter 26A.

Mass: Acts 13:14,43-52; Psalm: 99; Apocalypse 7:9,14-17; John 10:27-30.

Today is traditionally called 'Good Shepherd' Sunday even though today in the readings there is no mention of shepherds. There is mention of sheep and lambs though. I always struggle with cosy images of lambs and sheep. My first post as Parish Priest was in a largely agricultural area with plenty of local sheep with their spring lambs being fattened for slaughter. Our second reading is about a slaughtered lamb and there is no sentimentality. By and large sheep are pretty stupid and seem to be prone to just follow each other. The need for care is vital or they probably wouldn't survive. It is the very vulnerability of sheep and their offspring that is being emphasised here. This is where the care comes in that we are being challenged with. As this is also Vocations Sunday, usually about ordained ministry, we can simply see ourselves as stupid sheep in the need of being told what to do! Perhaps there is something deeper going on here? Jesus is both sheep and shepherd. Two different roles that he brings together. Perhaps we need to see ourselves, like Jesus, as both. We are both stupid in our vulnerability and also able to give ourselves for others in their need. Perhaps we need both images to grow into our own unique calling.