

Spiritually Speaking

I am a good shepherd. Are you?

By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church

The fourth Sunday of Easter is known as the "Good Shepherd Sunday." We have the popular images of Jesus the Good Shepherd carrying a sheep over His shoulders or we have a smiling Jesus sitting under a tree with a little lamb on His lap. These images of the shepherd appeal to us because they show Jesus's tenderness and compassion. A shepherd in those days walked ahead of the sheep, seeking out a safe path, taking them to the pastures, water, and shelter. The sheep followed him, because they recognized his voice, and they trusted him. An image of Jesus as a Good Shepherd is reassuring us that He is always our support on our journey through life. The people of Heppner are actually very familiar with this term "shepherding." The Irish settlers of Heppner were raising plenty of sheep once upon a time. Jesus the Good Shepherd gave us a good example of leading, feeding, and protecting His flock. We are all called to be shepherds.



Fr. Thankachan Joseph

During the rampant spread of corona, I have closely followed the lockdown stories of different countries. I have seen how different communities, priests, religious and consecrated persons turn out to be caring shepherds in their own localities. The stories of altruistic service and ultimate sacrifices have proved once again that the virus cannot kill the compassion, empathy, and caring nature of mankind. An example is the way people have reached out to the migrant workers. I was reminded of the words of Mother Theresa: "The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis but rather the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for and deserted by everybody. The greatest evil is the lack of love, and charity, terrible indifference towards one's neighbor who lives at the roadside assaulted by exploitation, corruption, poverty and disease." She narrates, "I remember I picked up a person from the street who was nearly eaten up with maggots and he said, 'I have lived like an animal in the street, but I am going to die like an angel, loved and cared for.'" This is what is expected of everyone who is a shepherd.

Who is a good shepherd? The dictionary meaning of "shepherd" is this: "a person who protects, guides, or watches over a person or group of people." In the Christian term, "shepherd" mostly refers to pastor, a member of the clergy, etc. "Shepherd" is not limited to clergy alone. For example, parents, teachers, employer, etc. are all shepherds. Shepherding is nothing but self-giving for the sake of someone else – a sacrificial love, dedication, commitment towards the flock that is in one's care.

It is good to understand the characteristics/tasks of a good shepherd. St John in his Gospel explains a shepherd as having mainly three tasks: 1) one who guides the sheep, 2) one who feeds/provides for the sheep, and 3) one who protects the sheep from all dangers of life.

1) Guide the sheep: it is the duty of the shepherd to show the sheep greener pastures for grazing. Those of you who are reading my article, I am sure, are in one way or another a shepherd. How do you lead the flock that is entrusted to your care? As we were going through the lock-down period due to the threat of COVID-19, we had a lot of time to spend with our families and children. Today those sheep under your care are looking for good models. There should not be a disparity in our doing and talking, for the dichotomies are actually confusing to the sheep. When you spend time together with the family these days, try to be a good example.

2) Feed the sheep: Psalm 23 begins like this: "The Lord is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack." I am sure all of you are working hard in your workplace, to actually earn more so that you can provide better things for your children and family. Like

the psalmist, "But He would feed Israel with the best wheat. I would satisfy you with honey from the rock" (81:16); or again in prophet Isaiah we see: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd" (40:11). Are you only worried about providing material things? Do you pray together with your family? Do you provide for spiritual growth of your sheep? I know many parents will look for the best school, best sports centers, and other matters pertaining to this world. How many of you really spend time with your children to impart spiritual matters? Have you ever asked your kids to set aside the electronic gadgets and asked them to spend a little more time in prayer and reading the scriptures?

3) Protect the sheep: Jesus says in John (10: 11), "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep..." Recently, I have seen a picture that struck me greatly. A young deer goes to drink water from a lake; as it was gulping water, a crocodile comes to eat up its young one. Noticing the danger, the mother deer comes across the younger one and becomes the prey to the crocodile. A good example for laying down a life for the sake of another's. In biblical days, shepherds guarding their flock by night would gather their flocks into an enclosure and sleep literally by lying across the entrance so that before a wild beast would attack the sheep, it would have to attack the shepherd first. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His own life to protect His flock. I am sure this is true of every parent.

The "Good Shepherd Sunday" theme invites every one of us to be like Jesus the Good Shepherd: Jesus, who has come "that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). When we encounter difficulties in our lives' paths and face serious problems the presence of Jesus the Good Shepherd reassures us that we are not abandoned, that Jesus is supporting and holding us up. Psalm 23 assures us that God as the Good Shepherd will lead us, His sheep, to green pastures, will give repose, and we will not want anything because He the Shepherd is always there as a comforter.

We need to ask ourselves two important questions: (1) Am I a faithful member of God's flock? Only those sheep who follow the guidance of the Shepherd could ever hope to arrive at the green pastures or be safe from the greedy wolves. (2) How could I participate more closely in the work of shepherding God's flock in my family? God made this promise in Ezekiel to His people that He Himself was going to be their good shepherd, for the shepherds had not fulfilled their promises: "You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. So, they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals" (Ezekiel 34: 3-4). The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is a challenging image for the Church today. In order that we might be united with the Good Shepherd and united more with one another, are we ready to listen to His voice, are we ready to do His will, here and beyond? Like the good shepherd after the heart of Jesus Christ, let's try to lead, feed, and protect the sheep who are under our care with dedication, commitment, and, above all, unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

~ G-T Trophy Corner ~

The Heppner Gazette Times would like to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Please send a photo along with your name, age, town you live in, location of the hunt and a description of the animal to editor@rapidserve.net, upload to Heppner.net or text to 541-980-6674.



Clay Spence of Albany and Tommy Wolff of Heppner called in these two Long-Beard tom turkeys. Photo taken in the Heppner Unit last week.

A View from the Green

Willow Creek Seniors golf results released

The Columbia-Blue Senior Golfers played at The Dalles Country Club on April 12. The winners from Willow Creek CC at The Dalles were as follows:

-Columbia Division (handicap 18 and below): Gross: 6. Scott Burright – 89, 8. Duane Disque and Dave Pranger – 90. Net: 2. Dennis Peck – 71, 8. Jim Swanson – 77.

-Blue Division (Handicap 19 to 24): Net: 7. Dave Creswick – 78.

-Senior Division (Handicap 25 and Above): Gross: 3. Roger Ehrmantraut – 103. Net: 8. Al Scott – 77.

The golfers enjoyed beautiful, sunny weather

conditions. The next CBSGA Tournament will be at Heppner's Willow Creek Country Club on May 10. Tee-off times will be at 7 a.m., 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Pre-registration is still available for the 7 a.m. tee time. The 11 a.m. tee time is filled. The 3 p.m. tee time is also available.

Due to the virus, lunch will not be provided by the Willow Creek ladies. However, a food trailer will be on the premises for the players.

Any questions about the May 10 tournament should be addressed to John Edmundson, local director for WCCC Seniors, 541-676-5177.

Over the Tee Cup

Thirteen women turned out for the Willow Creek Country Club Ladies Play Day on a cold and windy day April 13. Hostesses were Judy Harris Betts and Pat Edmundson.

Results are as follows: Low gross of the field-Virginia Grant. Low net of the field-Sharon Har-

ison. Least putts of the field-Pat Dougherty.

Low gross-Flight A-Corol Mitchell; Flight C-Lorene Montgomery, Low net-Betty Carter, Least putt-Chris Linder. Best ball winners (modified team)-Virginia Grant, Betty Carter, Pat Dougherty.

WCCC men play at Arlington

Sunday men's play on April 18 took place at the China Creek golf course in Arlington. There were no results available.

The next men's play will be Sunday, April 25. The Mustang Scramble has been cancelled. A reminder

that the shootout is scheduled for Sunday, May 2. This is a two-man event so golfers are reminded to get their partner lined up.

Eighteen teams are participating in the Wednesday night match play.

Heppner FFA chapter to hold plant sale fundraiser

The Heppner FFA Chapter will hold a plant sale fundraiser at Heppner High School on Thursday, April 29, from 3-6 p.m., Friday, April 30, from 1-6 p.m. and Saturday, May 1 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

"Heppner FFA is proud to bring healthy plants to our community for the 15th year," said an FFA spokesperson. "The plant sale will

offer numerous varieties of fruits, vegetables and flowers for sale."

This event is open to the public. "All are encouraged to attend to get healthy plants and support Heppner FFA."

For more information, follow Heppner FFA on Facebook. Visit bit.ly/heppner-ffa or search "Heppner FFA".

Funeral Notice

Rebecca E. Owen – Rebecca E. Owen of Hermiston, OR was born on January 29, 1977 in Hermiston. She died on April 11, 2021 in Richland, WA at the age of 44 years.

A celebration of life service and potluck will be held at the Lexington Bible Church, Lexington, OR on Saturday, April 24, 2021 at noon.

Following the church service and potluck a convey will travel to the location where she wanted her ashes spread.

Everyone is invited to share memories of Rebecca with her family at burns-mortuaryhermiston.com.

Burns Mortuary of Hermiston is in care of arrangements.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE: MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

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