

By Pat Haggerty

The other day I was caring for my five year old grand-daughters, Jane and Rose. They are in kindergarten in a parochial school. My daughter had asked me to help them go over a prayer that they had to say over the loudspeaker. It was a prayer for Good Shepherd Sunday. It struck me in its simplicity: “Jesus is our Good Shepherd. He is with us night and day. He knows each one of us. He shows us ways to love God and one another.”

When I attended Mass on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, I thought of this beautiful, little prayer. It reminded me of the unending support of Jesus as he guides us and watches over his flock. We sang in the responsorial from Psalm 100: “We are his people, the sheep of his flock.”

Not many of us have seen a shepherd in action. However, we know that a “good shepherd” will do anything to protect his flock from danger. So it is with the Lord. He offered himself as the paschal lamb to redeem us and give us new life. We hear in the Book of Revelation: “For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

When we are feeling disconsolate, when we are despairing, when we feel alone, we need only think of the Good Shepherd and his promise to be with us, to be with us night and day.

Sometimes we feel that we are facing life's struggles alone. We are never alone for the good shepherd knows us and is watching us.

Think about the unease we feel when we are entering a room of strangers. Even the most confident extrovert might feel a moment of panic. We might be involved in something for our workplace, we might be engaged in an activity of service, or we might even be attending a social event. Then, by chance, we spot someone we know and everything changes. We are more relaxed, and we feel we have someone we can connect with.

The fact is---we are never alone! Our good shepherd is always with us to be our protector and guide. I am reminded of the beautiful image of the good shepherd one often sees on holy cards. It is the picture of Jesus holding a lamb over his shoulders. He is always holding us up, bearing our burden, and carrying us along.

Like the beautiful poem by Mary Stevenson, "Footprints in the Sand." We have the image of Jesus bearing us up. Jesus tells the man who questions the presence of the Lord in times of despair: "My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

It is the Good Shepherd who carries us when needed!