By Pat Haggerty

I know I should be looking ahead to this coming Sundays' gospel readings. However, I can't seem to let go of last Sunday's readings. It seems to me that when we "reflect" it's an act of going back. One of the definitions of the word reads: "to cast back light." That is a good way of looking at the gospels and how we can reflect on them. We listen to the gospel at Mass; think it over; and try to make sense of it in our own lives. We try to cast that light of their beauty to others.

I think that's what it is all about---making sense of God's word and translating it into our own sphere of understanding. We translate it into our own schema, our own base of knowledge. We make it our own and apply it to our daily lives. We allow God's Word to come alive!!

It was easy for me to allow this to happen for me last week. I had just returned from spending a week at Shelburne Farms in Vermont. I was there teaching a course on service-learning and sustainability. I won't get into an explanation of those two terms right now. I will leave that for a future blog. Both those topics fit into what we should be doing as Christians; but, more on that later.

One could not find a more pastoral, gorgeous setting than Shelburne Farms. It is over 1,000 acres of "verdant" land just outside of Burlington, Vermont. It is a former estate turned into a living museum and active farm. It has rolling hills, farm barns, an exquisite garden, and even a coach barn (where our classes were held). Every morning, I drove past flocks of sheep and herds of cows just grazing on the green grass.

It is easy to reflect on the "verdant pastures" of Psalm 23 when I think of Shelburne Farms. It is the Lord's example right there for me!! I delighted in those verdant pastures and I was by the "restful waters" of Lake Champlain. On a daily basis, a lush table of fresh foods was spread before me---all fruits of the garden and of someone's labors.

How lucky I am to be able to make the connections in Psalm 23 with what I actually saw and experienced but a week ago! How good is the Lord for having provided me with that

opportunity!

I am not suggesting that we need to check out a local farm in order to understand Psalm 23 or God's goodness. However, having those tangibles definitely make the words of the Bible come alive. In that Sunday's gospel, the Lord tells his disciples: "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." I was able to take a mental rest while at Shelburne Farms. It certainly was not a deserted place, but it was a place where I could find my own sense of peace.

So, what am I trying to say from all of this? To synthesize my ramblings, my points are the following: We need to make daily connections with the gospels and with the readings from the Mass. There are simple ways we can apply them to our lives---just look around and reflect. We need to ponder the words of the Psalms. Sometimes they are so familiar to us, that we don't pause to reflect on their beauty. Finally, we need to take heed of God's word. What He was telling His disciples are also reminders for us.