**Homily for the 4th Sunday of Easter***Rev. Francis D. Kim*

One Sunday afternoon, at the Sunday school class, I was talking about the Good Shepherd to the children. I talked about Psalm 23, and the youngsters learned the story of the shepherd and the sheep.

I told about the sheep, that they were not smart and needed lots of guidance, and that a shepherd’s job was to stay close to the sheep, protect them from wild animals and keep them from wandering off that would get them hurt or killed. Then, I asked the children, “If you are the sheep, then who is the shepherd?”

They replied, “Jesus, Jesus is the shepherd.” A few seconds later, a little girl frowned thoughtfully, and then said with a shrug, “If Jesus is our Good Shepherd and we are His flock, then, you must be a sheep dog!”

Today’s Gospel reminds us Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we are His flock. So, we belong to Him, and He leads us to real happiness, and nobody can take us out of His hands!

In Jesus’ time, on the dry land and rocky hillsides of Palestine, the sheep always needed constant care by the shepherd. And, every night, the shepherd brought the sheep into the shelter. Once the sheep were inside for the night, the shepherd slept at the door all night. The sheep could not get out without stepping over the shepherd’s body, which meant they would not get out at all during the night. So, it is easy to imagine Jesus in the role of the Good Shepherd, to picture Him lovingly protecting His flock, and also to realize that He is the only gate through which the sheep can pass safely.

The Good Shepherd, Jesus, knows us by name, loves us deeply, and loves us enough to die. He chose to die on the Cross, chose to sacrifice all, even give up His divinity to show His love for us. That is Christ, the Good Shepherd.

He shows us that the way to happiness lies not in filling each of our desires, but in following Jesus. In our daily lives, we know God loves us and cares for us. Just look around, and you will see His presence. You feel God’s love in your life. Here, surely He is among us. The Risen Lord is everywhere among His people always.

The voice of Good Shepherd comes to us and leads us everyday. All of us can hear His voice, and we can follow Him because He is our Good Shepherd, and we are His flock. But, sometimes we cannot hear His voice because we are so busy every day, and we are living with our own desires. We have to listen to His voice carefully. We can hear His voice. He knows each and everyone of us by our names, and we know Him by His name, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God is among us.

We follow the shepherd by joining the flock of Christ not just in our minds, but in a very special way. It means belonging to a parish community, coming to Mass, receiving the Sacraments, supporting its activities, refreshing ourselves in faith, and sharing that faith with others.

In this Easter season, let us always remember that the Risen Christ loves us, cares for us, and stands with us no matter what happens. We have to listen to His voice, then we may enter the sheepfold through Him, and be safe and have eternal happiness.

Every hour, every day in every part of the world, the Risen Lord is sending His grace to bring back the lost and to embrace His flock.

Where the flock is, there is the shepherd. When the flock may be in difficult terrain, experiencing terrible storms, or be attacked by enemies, always the Good Shepherd is with them.

Whether we are on a cliff or in a valley, here, we will find the Lord’s guidance. Here, we will find the table of the Lord for us. Here, we will find the entry way to dwelling in the Lord’s house forever with true happiness.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has bound Himself to His flock forever. Join the flock, and the Shepherd will embrace you. Embrace the Shepherd, and you will join the flock. The flock and the Shepherd, the Lord and His Church are one for good!

But, the choice is up to us!