

“One lost sheep among a thousand breaks the shepherd’s heart;  
one lost soul among a thousand breaks God’s heart.”

— Matshona Dhliwayo

### The Good Shepherd is calling you and me: A reflection on our Gospel

I don’t know what it was like for you growing up, but for me, growing up in Covington, KY I certainly did not see many shepherds or sheep. The imagery of shepherd and sheep is a difficult one with which to relate. It doesn’t come out of our life experience but for the people of Jesus’ times it was a common one. Shepherds and sheep were an everyday sight. When shepherds brought their sheep to the market there was a common enclosure where the sheep could be safely kept. Shepherds had their own call or whistle. When their sheep heard it, they recognized it and responded. Jesus tells us that his sheep hear his voice and follow him.

In the midst of such a mentality Jesus presents Himself not as a liberating warrior but as a loving shepherd who would lead his flock to the fresh waters and green pastures of everlasting life.

Fr. Ronald Rolheiser wrote: God’s voice does judge and condemn, it does so not by coercive force, but in the same way that the innocence of a baby judge’s false sophistication, in the way that generosity exposes selfishness, in the way that big-heartedness reveals pettiness, in the way that light makes darkness flee, and in the way that the truth shames lie. God’s voice judges us not by overpowering us but by shining love and light into all those places where we find ourselves huddled in fear, shame, bitterness, hostility, and sin.

We can be sure that a shepherd’s call to his sheep was not a loud, thunderous yell that would startle and spook them. Rather it would be a gentle whistle or call they would recognize and respond to.

And so, it is with us, do we recognize the voice of the good shepherd over all the other voices promising abundance? Might we be able to swing open the gate to his commands to take care of the poor, the hungry, naked, homeless, lost, addicted, the despised, neglected, the foreigner and those different than us?