



On this Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Church invites us to contemplate Christ as the Good Shepherd—the one who knows His sheep, calls them by name, and leads them to life. One of the most recognizable signs of a shepherd is the crook, the staff with its curved end. This simple tool reveals something profound about how God cares for us.

A shepherd uses the crook to guide the sheep, gently pulling them back when they wander and nudging them forward when they hesitate. So too does Christ act in our lives. There are moments when we drift, distracted or lost in sin, and the Lord, in His mercy, reaches out to draw us back.

At other times, we grow comfortable or fearful, unwilling to move where He is leading. Then, like a good shepherd, He urges us forward—toward growth, conversion, and deeper faith.

The crook is also a sign of protection and care. A shepherd uses it to rescue sheep from danger and to defend the flock. In the same way, Christ protects us from what would harm our souls and seeks us out when we are trapped or struggling. As the liturgy reminds us, He is the Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep.

This image is carried forward in the Church through the bishop's crozier. It is not merely ceremonial—it is a visible reminder that the bishop, as a successor of the Apostles, is called to share in Christ's pastoral care: to guide, correct, protect, and lead the faithful. This reflects the Church's constant teaching that Christ continues to shepherd His flock through those He has appointed.

Today, we are invited to ask ourselves: do we allow the Good Shepherd to guide us? Do we trust His care, even when He pulls us back or pushes us forward?

To belong to Christ is not simply to be counted among His sheep—it is to listen for His voice, to follow where He leads, and to trust that His guidance will always lead us to the fullness of life.

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