

No One Forces Him

This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Acts 4:8-12 - The stone that has become the cornerstone
- ▶ 1 John 3:1-2 - The children of God
- ▶ John 10:11-18 - The Good Shepherd

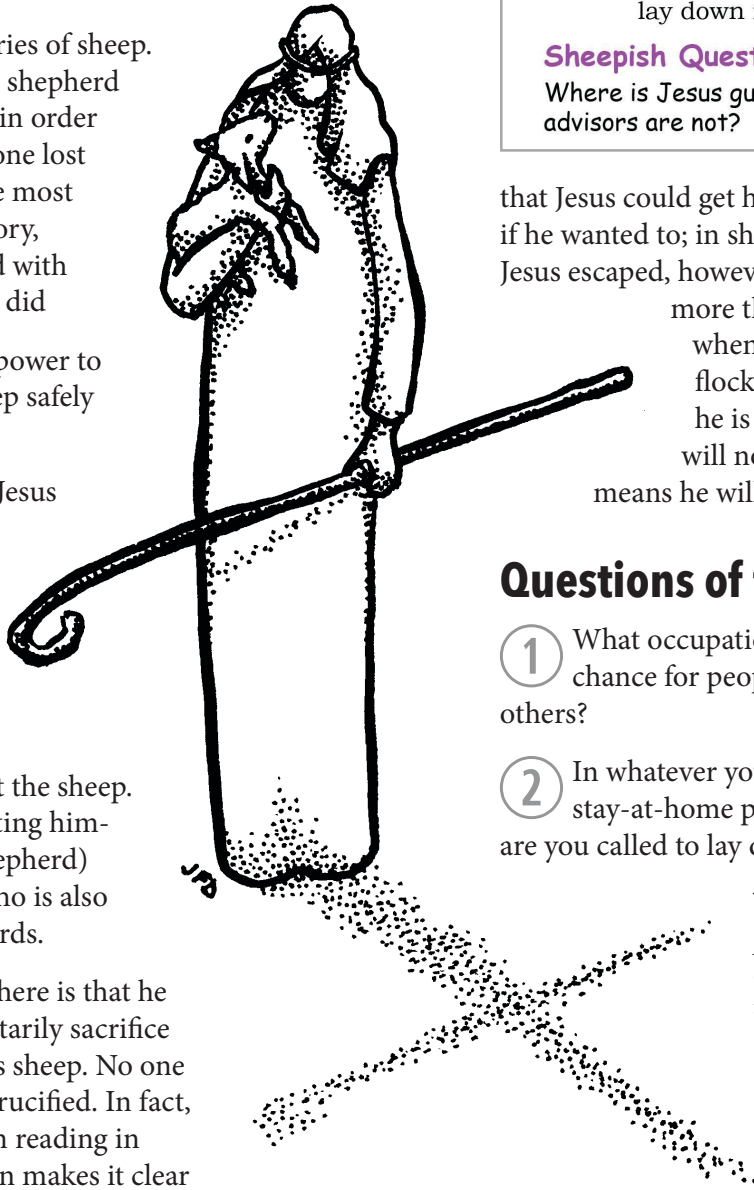
In Jesus' time and culture, raising sheep was such a common vocation that it was easy for Jesus' listeners to identify with metaphors about sheep, flocks, and shepherds. Many stories, parables, psalms, and commandments in the Old Testament revolved around sheep and shepherds. You might think here of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want..."

Jesus also told stories of sheep. The parable of the shepherd who left 99 sheep in order to search out the one lost sheep is one of the most famous. In that story, Jesus equated God with the shepherd who did

everything in his power to bring the lost sheep safely home.

In today's gospel, Jesus is even more direct. He identifies himself as the ultimate good shepherd who is willing to die in order to protect the sheep. He is clearly equating himself (the Good Shepherd) with the Father who is also the best of shepherds.

Jesus' main point here is that he is willing to voluntarily sacrifice his own life for his sheep. No one forces him to be crucified. In fact, during the Passion reading in John's Gospel, John makes it clear



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Sheepish Question:
Where is Jesus guiding me that other leaders or advisors are not?

that Jesus could get himself out of his predicament if he wanted to; in short, he does not have to die. If Jesus escaped, however, he would be like nothing more than a hired hand who runs away when he sees a wolf coming for the flock. Jesus tells us ahead of time that he is willing to stand fast, and that he will not abandon his sheep, even if it means he will die for them.

Questions of the Week

- 1 What occupations in today's world offer the chance for people to lay down their lives for others?
- 2 In whatever your life situation is (paid work, a stay-at-home parent, a retired person, etc) how are you called to lay down your life for others?

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