

## HOMILY EASTER 4B 29 APR 2012: GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

It's an exciting weekend in our parishes as we celebrate the First Holy Communion of 15 of our students. Since we're honoring these little ones this weekend, I'll try to talk in simple terms, just so the adults can understand.

It's really providential, I mean, it's really neat that our First Communion Masses fall on Good Shepherd Sunday, the 4th Sunday of Easter. Holy Communion has a lot to do with the Good Shepherd. To understand why, we should first ask a simple question, namely, what makes the Good Shepherd good? Jesus the Good Shepherd is good because he loves his sheep. He loves them so much that he gives his life for his sheep, that is, for you and me. Jesus dies that his sheep may live. So that's why we have crucifixes in our churches. They help us remember how much Jesus loves us.

Jesus loves us so much that he wants us to enjoy his love forever. And so by dying on the cross, Jesus gives the members of his flock the chance to live forever so that they can be loved by him and love him in return forever and ever. Of course, we all know that Jesus died, rose, and went back to heaven almost 2000 years ago. Jesus still wants to give his love to everyone, including people like us who never had the chance to meet him on earth. And so Jesus gave us this special gift called Holy Communion. In Holy Communion, Jesus is fully present; in the consecrated host, Jesus is there just as much as he was when he walked the streets of Jerusalem 2000 years ago. The only difference is that Jesus is there in the host in such a way that he can enter all the way into our hearts when we receive Holy Communion. So every time we receive Holy Communion, we get to be as close to Jesus as we can ever be in this world.

Finally, to make sure that Holy Communion is always available to his people, Jesus also gave us another special gift called the priesthood. Priests are men called by Jesus and ordained by the Church so that they can make Holy Communion present at the Mass. You see, only priests can make Jesus really present by saying the special prayers at the altar. Priests continue to do the work of the Good Shepherd by taking care of his sheep until he returns. However, nowadays there is a shortage of priests, esp. in the USA. That means that there are fewer Masses in fewer places and so it's harder for people to get to Communion. This is a big problem. But we can work together to solve it. First, we all have to pray that God will give us more priests so that Communion will be available to all his people. Second, we need to encourage young men who may be considering the priesthood to answer God's call. Third, those of our communicants who are receiving their First Holy Communion today should ask God to show them where you should become priests yourselves. Let's all dedicate ourselves to work and pray so that the Lord will continue to raise up priests who will make his love present in the Eucharist to his people.