

Weekly Reflection

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Sunday, May 11, 2025 | Fourth Sunday of Easter | *Can You Hear Me Now? – Said the Good Shepherd*

There's this guy—we'll call him Shep—who bought a fancy new smartphone with all the bells and whistles. It could recognize his face, check the weather, and practically make a cup of coffee. One day, Shep showed it off at the diner, saying, "Watch this. I can call my dog from anywhere using this app." He pressed a button, the phone made a bark sound, and his golden retriever, Lambchop, came running like she'd just heard the voice of heaven. His buddy, impressed, asked, "Does she always come when you call?" Shep grinned, ***"Oh, she hears me every time. Whether she listens? That's between her and God."***

Truth is, we're a lot like Lambchop. We hear the voice of the Good Shepherd—sometimes through Scripture, sometimes in silence, sometimes through the kindness or correction of another—but whether we truly listen is another story. We may hear Jesus inviting us into prayer, into deeper trust, or into a new beginning, but too often we're already halfway toward some distraction before we even think to pause and respond. The world is full of squirrels—busy schedules, social media, fears, anxieties—that pull our attention in every direction.

Over the past two weeks, I've had the joy of witnessing 30 young members of our parishes receive their First Holy Communion. Their wide eyes, folded hands, and joyful hearts reminded me what it looks like to respond to Jesus with pure, eager faith—no hesitation, no distractions. In their innocence and wonder, we see the beauty of what it means to truly listen to the Shepherd's voice and follow Him without reservation.

But as we grow older, faith can get more complicated. The innocence of childhood gives way to the weight of responsibilities, questions, and doubts. We build walls, protect ourselves, get busy. We might still hear the voice of the Shepherd through a prompting in prayer or the nudge of our conscience, but instead of running toward Him like Lambchop, we pause, calculate, and sometimes walk the other way. Still, Jesus continues to call. He says, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life... and no one can take them out of my hand" (John 10:27–28). What a promise—that even when we stray or get distracted, He knows our name and never lets go.

One of the greatest assurances of our faith is that the Shepherd never tires of calling us back. He doesn't just wait for us to figure things out—He actively seeks us. Through the Eucharist, through one another, and through the grace of the sacraments, Jesus reaches into the chaos of our lives and says, "I've got you." He's not some distant voice through a speaker. He's present, personal, and persistent. The hands that once reached out to Peter sinking in the waves now reach out to you and me, again and again, saying, ***"You are mine."***

This week, I encourage you to slow down and intentionally listen for the Shepherd's voice. Whether it's in a moment of quiet, a walk outside, the laughter of your children, or in the stillness after Communion—He is speaking. Let's take a cue from our First Communicants and run toward Him with open hearts and joyful faith. Because no matter how far we've wandered, no matter how long it's been, the Shepherd is calling—and He always brings His sheep home.

Sunday Homily

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Fourth Sunday of Easter | Acts 13:14, 43–52, Psalm 100:1–2, 3, 5, Revelation 7:9, 14b–17, John 10:27–30

Homily: Kevin the Wandering Sheep!

“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand.” Let me tell you a story about a shepherd. Not a regal, dramatic one like in the stained-glass windows—just a regular guy named Gus. Gus wore dusty sandals, had a sunburned neck, a solid mustache, and more love in his heart than sense sometimes. And Gus had a flock. A ragtag, slightly confused, but very beloved flock of sheep. Now, each sheep had its quirks—but one in particular stood out: Kevin. Kevin the sheep was... special. The kind of sheep who thought fences were “suggestions.” He once tried to ride a turtle. Another time, he got stuck in a bush shaped like a llama. If there was a way to get into trouble, Kevin found it. But Gus loved him all the same.

One morning, Gus counted heads. Ninety-seven... ninety-eight... ninety-nine. *Where’s Kevin?* He sighed. Not again. But instead of throwing up his hands and saying, “Well, that’s Kevin for you,” Gus handed the rest of the flock over to Sheila the sheepdog—who ran a tight ship and had no time for nonsense—and set off looking. He searched all of Kevin’s usual hiding spots. Behind the old fig tree. Inside the chicken coop. Under the cart with the squeaky wheel. Nothing. Then, just as he was about to give up, Gus heard a soft, pathetic “baaaa.” And there he was. Kevin, wedged inside a giant clay jar outside the village like a wool-stuffed cork. Gus didn’t lecture him. He didn’t say, “You got yourself into this, get yourself out.” No, he grinned, tugged him loose (with help from a confused villager), and hoisted Kevin over his shoulders. “You’re a mess, Kev,” he chuckled. “But you’re my mess.”

When they got back, the other sheep gave Kevin the side-eye. Sheila growled a little. But Gus just smiled and said, “Come on, everybody. We’re going home.” Friends, this is not just a cute story. This is the Gospel. In today’s reading, Jesus says, *“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life... and no one will snatch them out of my hand.”* That’s not theory—that’s truth. And it’s not just for the perfectly-behaved, never-wandered-off kind of sheep. It’s for the *Kevins* of the world. It’s for us. The voice of the Good Shepherd is not a voice of condemnation. It’s a voice that *knows us*, that seeks us, that calls out in love. And when we’re stuck—wedged in a jar of shame, fear, sin, or just plain foolishness—Jesus doesn’t wave from a distance or say, “You should’ve known better.” No, He comes *to us*. He finds us. He lifts us up. The beauty of Jesus’ words today is not just that He knows His sheep—it’s that He *claims* us. He says, *“They shall never perish... No one can take them out of my hand.”*

Let that sink in. If you’ve ever felt like you were slipping from grace, forgotten, unworthy—remember Kevin. Remember the Shepherd who drops everything to find the one who wandered. Who isn’t embarrassed by our messes, who doesn’t keep a scorecard, and who *never lets go*. And here’s the twist: Jesus isn’t just telling us how *He* acts—He’s also showing us how *we* are called to act. We are called to be shepherds to each other. How many people do we know who feel like lost sheep? Those who’ve stepped away from the Church, who are hurting, confused, stuck in their own jar, wondering if anyone still cares? Maybe God is nudging us today to be a little more like Gus. To go after that friend, that relative, that “Kevin” in our life—not with judgment, but with love. Not to shame, but to carry home.

So the next time you find yourself stuck—whether it’s in fear, anxiety, sin, grief, or just one of life’s many distractions—pause. Listen. His voice is calling. The Shepherd is coming. And when He finds you, He will not scold you, He will not shame you—He will smile, lift you up, and whisper, *“You’re my mess. And I’m bringing you home.”*