

## The Good Shepherd and the Eucharist

What do we want to do today? How do we want to meditate on our Lord's activity as a shepherd? I think we should show how he continues his task as a shepherd in a mysterious way here on the altar in the Eucharist, and how he wants to continue it until the end of time, until the end of the world.

Two questions involuntarily present themselves to us. The first is: How can we describe our Lord's task as a shepherd in the sacrament of the altar? The second question is: What does his work as a shepherd require of us, his flock?

We all know what can be said on both points, and yet we don't know it. There are so many things we know, and yet don't know. This is because they do not enter into our hearts, they do not influence our everyday lives.

This is true of the first question: How can we describe our Lord's activity as shepherd? We learnt the answer at school. If we think of the great Eucharistic Congress in Munich in 1960, which had as its motto: "*Pro mundi vita* – For the Life of the World"; or if we think of the various formulations of the present Council (Second Vatican Council), it is always the same: Our Lord continues his work as shepherd on the altar by remaining constantly with his flock.

He gives us his presence. He is not satisfied with being up in heaven; he wants to be here. Just as the shepherd remains with his flock, so our Lord wants to be with *his* flock. He gives us his presence.

However, this does not satisfy him. He gives us himself, he wants us to enjoy his own Flesh and Blood. The Good Shepherd cares for his sheep. He leads them to good pastures (cf Ez 34, 14). This good pasture to which he leads us, the food we receive from our Good Shepherd, is the Flesh and Blood of that Good Shepherd.

Finally, he offers himself up to the Father day after day on the altar, so that the Father may look down with pleasure on his parish, his flock.

(...) Let us think, first of all, of his presence. Our Lord is constantly with us. We are his flock. He wants to be with us, his flock. Everyone should have an opportunity to come to him.

How is he with us? In three ways: firstly, with infinite humility. During Lent we heard those words: 'He emptied himself' (Phil 2,8), it was as though he left the heavenly Father's throne behind. He became a human being. He lay in the crib as a human being; he hung on the cross as a human being. That is how much he lowered himself. Yet, even this was not enough for him. He took on the form of bread. He emptied himself; that is how profoundly humble he is.

Secondly, he is present here with infinite gentleness. Think of all he has to put up with! Since he came down to be with us, we, his flock, should also be with him; we should obey him, try to be in contact with him, commune with him. Yet how often he is alone here in the tabernacle! How much ingratitude, how much indifference he has to put up with, even while we are here at Holy Mass. And how many sacrileges he has to put up with. He is present amongst us with infinite gentleness.

Finally, with infinite love. He wants us to have the opportunity to unburden ourselves to him in all our needs. He calls out to us: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11,28). So there is no need to run from door to door, we needn't look constantly for change, because we cannot bear being on our own any longer. No, we can unburden ourselves to him, we can tell him about all our needs and get from him the strength we need to master life and draw the Father's good pleasure upon ourselves. During his life it was said: "Power came out from him and healed all of them" (Lk 6,19). That same power comes from the tabernacle here, from him, if we only gather around him with deep faith as his flock, making him the centre of our lives, our helper in all our difficulties and the centre of our lives.

This is how we can describe our Lord's work as shepherd here in the tabernacle.  
(12.4.1964, p 10-14)