

Fourth Sunday of Easter...Sunday, April 29, 2012

I just met with Jim Hubbard, the rancher at whose Yellowstone Ranch I will give a Creation Centered Retreat June 10.

He mentioned that this morning they had spotted eighth grizzlies out in the wilderness near the ranch. Jim runs cattle up there. There are also wolves, now, that help restore the original ecosystem in that wild land. So Jim's cattle need some protection.

This is an age old story and Jesus knew all about sheep needing the guidance and protection from their shepherds.

In our Church, our bishops carry "crozier" which are really shepherd's staffs. How sad it is that too many of these same bishops neglected the lambs of the flock and tolerated the sexual abuse of minors, mistakenly thinking that pedophile priests could be called to "reform."

Today, Jesus describes himself as "the Good Shepherd," and he goes on beyond that. He tells us that he will lay down his life for his flock and indeed he did so on the cross.

He also tells us, "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

It was not so long ago that Catholics believed only Catholics would or could be saved. And it is current belief among many fundamentalist Protestants that only born again Protestants WILL be saved. They believe that all non Christians, as well as Catholics, will be "left behind" when Jesus comes again.

Once and for all for Catholics, the Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Holy Spirit's work extends beyond the boundaries of Catholicism, and thus, in God's providence, Hindus, Moslems, and Jews can also be saved.

Writing recently of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Pope Benedict wrote:

"Jesus himself is the shepherd of Israel, the shepherd of humanity. And he takes injustice upon himself; he shoulders the destructive burden of guilt. He allows himself to be struck down in the course of history. *'The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.'* JN 10:11 ... As the Risen Lord, he is now in the fullest sense the shepherd who leads, through death, to the path of life."

Finally, in today's second reading, we are called to our exalted dignity: Who are we? 1 John gives us an answer: "Beloved, see what love the Father has bestowed upon us that we may be called the children of God. Yet, so we are."

Rejoice today, that Jesus is our shepherd and we are all God's children.

Breakfast Question:

Do you know people who believe that only people like themselves will be saved?

Personal Reflection:

What do I need to be saved *FROM*?