

“Someone to Watch Over Me”

I think I might be an old soul or someone who came a little bit too late in life for I love some of the old classic songs. When I read today’s readings, Gershwin’s “Someone to Watch Over Me” popped into my head. The song was made famous in recordings by Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Linda Ronstadt, and a host of others. The song originally appeared in the 1926 musical “Oh, Kay!” However, a whole new generation was introduced to Gershwin’s “Someone to Watch Over Me” in the movie “Mr. Holland’s Opus.” The lyrics include lamb and shepherd references that could be appropriate, out of context of course, for today’s psalm and gospel reading.

The lines that I am referring to are “Tell me where is the shepherd for this lost lamb?” and “...I’m a little lamb who’s lost in the wood...” All of us can use a shepherd to prod us along as we have at some point been “a little lamb lost in the wood.” We need a Good Shepherd who can guide us, protect us, and love us. But, what do we really know about shepherds?

A shepherd cares for his flock. The flock is literally at the mercy of the shepherd. The shepherd will make himself/herself known to the flock as they pick up the scent of the shepherd, who in turn, has rolled around in enough sheep wool and other things to pick up the scent of the sheep. They know him!! The sheep are led to water and food by the shepherd as well.

A shepherd also protects his sheep. He/she keeps them near the house/barn/gate and is alerted by the sheep of potential danger as they bleat and scurry about the pen. The shepherd can then protect the sheep from the dangers of a bandit, wolf, or any other predator or thief. In the same way, Jesus tells us that the Good Shepherd protects us from evil. Ultimately, the a good shepherd will also lay down his life for his sheep. Didn't Jesus do that for us?

Jesus did give the ultimate gift of his life but followed through with the resurrection. It is from the resurrection that we get the courage and happiness to move on and live our lives fully in his name. It is where the early Christians got their courage and happiness from in the midst of torment and suffering and the hands of those who, for many reasons, couldn't comprehend why they would continue to gather and, indeed, multiply in number.

Perhaps it was due to the fact that they had been shepherded or had a good shepherd among them in Peter that they were able "recognize the signs and wonders being done, shared their faith in the temple as well as shared their food. When they realized that they would be discriminated against by the mainline Jewish people, they began to take care of themselves. They made sure that everyone had enough food and clothing. They were a happy people and because of this their numbers increased every day.

Ultimately this happened because they had good shepherds. They had leaders and ministers in their corner who would guide them, care for them, and protect them. Yes, they even loved one another. I believe that I shared with you before that the fact that they took care of each other was a sore spot with the oppressors. “Look at the little Christians! See how they love one another” was meant as an insult as it was originally delivered as a sneer. The early Christian church took that phrase, “see how they love one another,” and made it their slogan or tag line. They even extended their hospitality to others in the community inclusive of those who had once oppressed or tormented them.

It is because we have good leaders (and hopefully a decent minister) to “shepherd” us as a church community. It has been said to me on numerous occasions how there is a very positive vibe at both of our churches. As we continue to branch out, take some chances, and make sure that all of our members and even into the community that people will be able to say “see how they love one another in Southwick and First Church in Westfield.” As members of the body of Christ, we are called upon to serve as shepherds to those in need. We have to offer care, protection, and love to those in need.

While we recognize our need to have “Someone to Watch Over” us, we may be called to be “Some to Watch Over” another. We are care for, protected, and loved by our God. May we do the same for others. Amen.