



Things to Ponder

- [About the Author](#)
- [Order](#)
- [About the Book](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Readers' Comments](#)
- [News & Events](#)
- [A Prayer for the Day](#)
- [Things To Shout Out!](#)
- [Things to Ponder](#)
- [My Favorite Quotes](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Home](#)

Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 17, 2016

Dear Parish Family,

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. I have fond recollections from childhood of the gentle image of Jesus with a lamb on his shoulders. As I have matured, however, I have come to realize that the shepherd imagery is anything but gentle. Those who watch sheep by night and by day have to be alert for wolves and other creatures that prey on them. Confrontations are frequent; and the shepherds themselves often become victims.

Not long after becoming our chief shepherd, Pope Francis reminded priests that we must smell like the sheep. Two words have emerged as consistent descriptions of this way of being as described in the writings of this Holy Father. They are companionship and encounter. These words are especially evident in his most recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*. In every family, there are those whose lifestyles do not reflect the ideal. Without changing Church teaching or losing sight of our goal, we are challenged to love and welcome to our gatherings those who do not fit into the mold. It seems to me that such an attitude is a perfect example of the gift of the Holy Spirit known as understanding. It literally means that we stand under another to let that person know he or she is supported and loved.

Walking the journey with a wayward brother or encountering an alienated sister is never easy; but isn't this what is asked of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb?

Yours in the Risen Lord,

Rev. Bill Foley

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