

## Reflections While Walking

### *Assistant Shepherds*

- Deacon Bob Salvestrini -



The Gospel from last weekend presents Jesus as the Good Shepherd, an image that resonates with most Christians. During my homily I mentioned that I didn't think that Jesus wishes that we remain just allegorical sheep for Him to shepherd throughout our lives. It mentioned that He would like each of us to try our hand at shepherding His sheep, effectively becoming assistant good shepherds. As assistant good shepherds we would act in solidarity with Jesus to protect and care for the marginalized and oppressed sheep who for whatever reason cannot care for themselves.

At prayer Monday morning I was reading from the writings of the late Bishop Ken Untener the man who was the inspiration for the booklets distributed by Saint Mary Parish Men's Ministry each Lenten and Advent season. I discovered that my thought of us as assistant good shepherds was not at all that original. Bishop Untener wondered how one would respond if Jesus were to ask the question, "Are you a good shepherd?" He saw someone feeling a personal responsibility for something that they cared about as much as they cared about themselves as a characteristic of a good shepherd.

He proposed we look into three areas of our life to facilitate answering the question for ourselves. First, he asked that we look at how we respond to environmental concerns. Do we have a sense of ownership for the earth and treat it and its resources with care or are we like hired hands with no sense of ownership? Next, he suggested we examine our attitude toward the whole of humanity. Do we see all peoples as members of one flock or do we look upon others as rivals and threats to our way of life? The third area he suggested we evaluate was how well we shepherd the people in our lives. As he put it, "do you lead them to green pastures, or do you run away and worry only about yourself?" In keeping with the metaphor, Bishop Untener summarized his thoughts by posing the question do your actions result in a gathering of the flock or its scattering? After reflecting on the three questions he proposed, how would you respond?