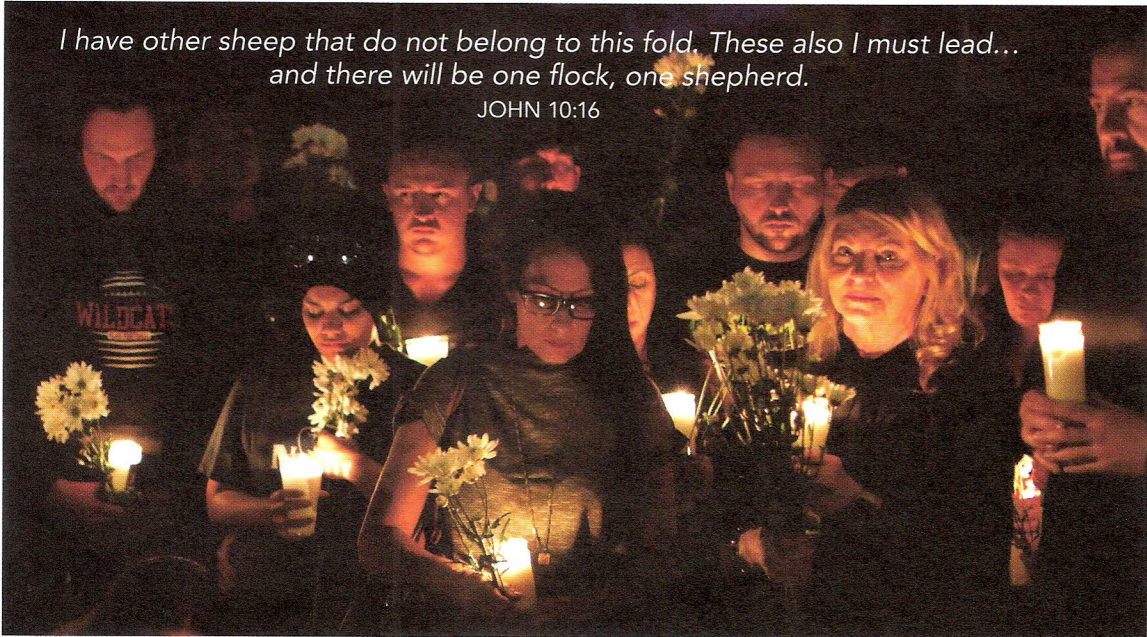




*I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead...
and there will be one flock, one shepherd.*

JOHN 10:16



CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

The Good Shepherd

For many of us, our only connection with sheep is with the cuddly white creatures found on holy cards. However, that image strays from the facts. Sheep are not household animals. They live outdoors; they lie down in grass, dirt, and mud. Furthermore, unlike many other animals, sheep cannot clean themselves. I'm not denigrating sheep, just putting aside any fanciful view of their nature.

Raising sheep was an important occupation in the ancient world. In fact, the royalty's governance of people was often described as shepherding. David was told: "You shall shepherd my people Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2). Later, when the royalty were not faithful to this charge, God declared: "I myself will pasture my sheep" (Ezekiel 34:15). This startling characterization of God became a characterization of Jesus.

Grime and animal smells, the blood of births and

deaths, inclement weather, and the threat of predators mark the life of a committed shepherd. Human comfort was secondary to the needs of the sheep. Sheep actually learn to recognize the voice of the one who feeds them, cares for them, protects them. The shepherd's voice seems to say: I am here for you, because you are mine. As "the good shepherd," Jesus is totally committed to us, his sheep. He attends to our needs, willing to risk his own security in order to save us. His care for us seems to say: I am here for you, because you are mine.

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

For Reflection

- * *Is Christ really your shepherd? Do you listen to his voice?*
- * *Do you rely on Christ's protection, even when you don't seem to feel it?*

