

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
May 3, 2009

On my little piece of property up in Alachua, I used to raise goats. Now, I honestly raised the goats to get an agriculture exemption, but it was still quite a lot of work. One of the biggest problems was predators, particularly coyotes. Now goats are not the smartest animals in the world. When a predator enter a pasture of goats, the scatter and run, until one goat gets caught. Then they all stop and graze while a member of their herd gets eaten.

We had a dog, really big guardian dog, called a maremma. Maremmas originated in Italy, and they are very big dogs, weighing 100 pounds or more, and very strong. They live with the goats and, though they eat dog food, they essentially think they are a goat, just a very big goat with teeth. They sleep with the goats. When they are first introduced to the herd, the goats shun them, but eventually they play with the goats, and they move with the herd. The difference is, when a predator comes, they will not run. The maremma will fight and defend the herd.

Jesus came among us, but he did not just think he was one of us, he was one of us. Jesus was a fully human man who would lay down his life for us, but he was also a divine being, capable of securing forgiveness for us. He is the Good Sheppard. He says, "I know mine, and they know me." But do we really know Jesus?

In the first reading and in the responsorial psalm, we hear that the stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone. I do not think any of us here are coyotes or wolves or any type of predator, but aren't we sometimes builders? Do we not sometimes reject Jesus? Sometimes it is out of fear, like the goats' first encounter with the guardian dog. Sometimes it is because we are lured away by temptation. But oftentimes, it is because we do not want to submit to the will of God.

Jesus was and is willing to lay down his life for his sheep and for all his sheep. All we need do is listen... listen... listen for his voice.