

Sheep must respond to shepherd

By Donna Fitch
Guest contributor

The fourth Sunday of Easter is called Good Shepherd Sunday, but unless we have some idea or concept of the relationship between sheep and shepherd we may miss the message present in this symbol entirely.

Perhaps many of us have never seen a shepherd so the symbol may have little or no meaning to us at all. The image presented in this weekend's readings provides much insight for someone acquainted with one who raises sheep.

A good shepherd is someone who cares for his sheep, which are the object of his attention and are looked upon with great affection. Knowing his sheep and giving up a great deal to care for them, he is especially partial to the lambs that are most in need. Aware of any difficulty, the good shepherd anticipates the need and provides solutions to the problems.

Winter storms can be true challenges

for the shepherd. In fact, to care for his sheep during last month's blizzard, this shepherd had to ski to the barn for two weeks to provide the feed necessary for the snowed-in sheep. This is an example of the constant care modeled for us by the good shepherd.

In this weekend's Gospel it says: "The sheep hear his voice as he calls his own by name and leads them out ... the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice."

When queried about this situation, the shepherd I know responded that the sheep not only know his voice, but the sound of his truck when he drives near the field where they feed. When asked if the sheep could differentiate between his truck and a neighbor's, the response was "definitely."

The shepherd also indicated that the animals react differently when he is all dressed up, that they like the shepherd to be consistent and not to "put on airs." In addition to being a flock animal and very dependent upon the shepherd, sheep are also very respon-

sive to good management. The shepherd marks his flock so that they can be quickly identified.

In our psalm for Sunday we recite: "The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want." Like the sheep, we are called to be dependent upon our Lord. We can easily learn from the shepherd's insights that this requires a relationship based upon trust, requiring listening and responding.

We would all do well to spend some quiet time reflecting on our relationship with our Lord. Are we as sheep with the shepherd? What are our identifying marks as members of



God's flock? Do we believe in faith — the Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want? Do we respond?

The relationship between the shepherd and the sheep requires time, energy, effort, dedication and sacrifice. The same is required if we wish to develop a strong relationship with God.

Are we willing to make this commitment?

Fitch is a member of the diocesan Liturgical Commission.

Churches to participate in Crop Walk May 2

ROCHESTER — Several parishes in Wayne, Seneca and Monroe counties are slated to take part in the annual CROP Walk on Sunday, May 2.

Money raised from sponsors during the 10-kilometer walk held nationally will be used to support local, national

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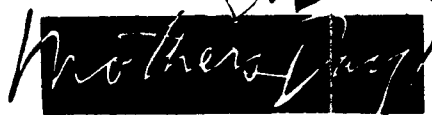
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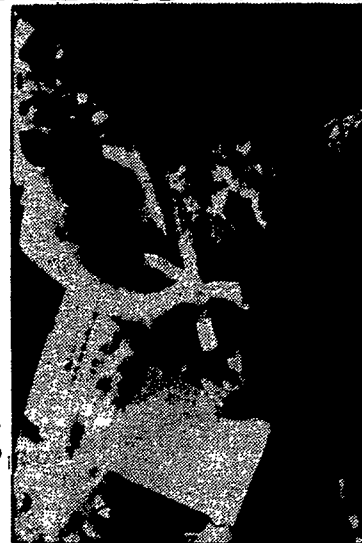
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