

## *The 23rd Psalm – Homily*

There is so much peace expressed in the words of the 23rd Psalm. Perhaps you too have been reflecting on these words in recent days – days when we all seem to be wandering under a cloud, in shadow. Take time to read through the psalm slowly – out loud – and allow these ancient words to offer comfort and calm.

Think about the picture the words create for us - green grass, abundant water, and a good shepherd, a safe and loving guide who leads and nurtures. Take time to smell the fresh grass – to drink of the sweet water – to feel the heat of warm sun on your shoulders. These are present, earthly blessings that sustain us and restore our soul. *The Lord is my shepherd* – the one who leads me.

God is with us. No matter what trouble comes our way, no matter what circumstances we may encounter, we are not alone. We know that there are dangerous, life-threatening valleys, frightening enemies and overwhelming trials in our lives – we are experiencing such a time on a global scale right now – yet God’s companionship transforms even those situations and makes them bearable.

God is with us in life – in death – in life beyond death. Anointing is a symbol of this – it is preparation for death, preparation of a body – God prepares us in this life for our eternal life. Our cup runs over – our life continues always with our loving Creator. *Thou art with me* – I am never alone.

Not only are we guided on a safe path and always in God’s company, but God is also our rear guard – our back-up – ready to support us if we stumble, to protect us when we are reckless, to keep evil at bay. When we trust in the Lord, we have a sanctuary – a retreat – for all time. God is behind us all the way – *goodness and mercy shall follow me all my life*.

The words of this psalm are reassuring because the Holy One is with us all the time – leading, abiding, supporting.

Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.”*

Let’s remember that we – while not actual sheep – are those fully known by Jesus. We are fully loved by Jesus and when we rest in him, we can feel safe in all the turmoil and tumult and uncertainty that surrounds us. We can share that comfort and sense of hope with others.

Jesus is *the good shepherd – the one who looks after his sheep – those whom he loves with a love that is stronger than death*. Jesus is the good shepherd who directs, cares, guides and is ever present with us. *Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. Amen*