Jeus is the Good Shepherd

In the Gospel this Sunday Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd.

There were lots of sheep and lots of shepherds where Jesus lived. Have you ever seen a shepherd? If we took a trip out into the countryside at the moment we would see lots of sheep, and lambs too, in the fields and on the mountainsides but no shepherds! Today if a farmer wants to gather up his sheep he goes out with his sheep dog but in the time of Jesus, it was shepherds who looked after the sheep, bringing them to find the good grass and the cool clean water and taking them through the places of danger. At night the shepherd led the sheep into a sheep pen and the shepherd then lay across the opening all night to keep the sheep from wandering away and to protect them from dangerous wolves and bears. The sheep knew their shepherd's voice and followed him wherever he went because they trusted him. He knew each one of his sheep and if any wandered away, he would keep searching until he found it and brought it back to safety.

In our Gospel on Sunday, Jesus says he is like the Good Shepherd; he takes good care of his sheep and unlike the bad shepherd, does not run away when danger comes but even lays down his life for his sheep. Who do you think are the sheep in Jesus' flock? Us of course! We know that Jesus cares for us, knows each one of us and calls us to follow him and trust him. And we know too that he did lay down his life for us.

Good Shepherd Sunday is a special day for us to pray for our priests and bishops who help to lead us to God and also to pray for more 'shepherds' for us.