



## ***Let Us Follow With Confidence***

May 11, 2014

On a trip to Ireland some years ago, our family was enchanted by the confident, stoic, long-haired Irish sheep. When I was still mastering the art of driving on the left side of the road, we rounded a narrow corner and came face to face with one of the sheep, who looked at us as if to say, “And you are....?” Clearly the sheep owned the road, whereas we were just interlopers. I pulled to the side and waited for the sheep to cross or move, which it did eventually, staring at us the entire time.

When we think of Jesus as the good shepherd, I think we have a different picture of sheep—docile, helpless, and eager to follow anyone who feeds them. I would prefer to think of us as Irish sheep who go where they want and look with suspicious at anything out of the ordinary. These sheep don’t follow any stranger’s voice; they just stare him or her down and go on their way.

On familiar ground , with the one who cares for them, they gather into pastures abundant with grass. When they finish grazing in one place, a gate opens to bring them to another, and to another after that.

“I am the gate,” Jesus says. He is the one who leads us further and further into his life.

In Celtic spirituality, the open gate is an invitation to the spiritual life. Let us be good Irish sheep who are not afraid to wander far and wide, knowing our shepherd will come to take us home.

Let us follow our shepherd with confidence. He is not just the gate-keeper, but the gate itself, promising far more than we can ever find in this world.

MARY KATHARINE DEELEY *sundaybulletin@liguori.org*