

Good Shepherds need clear water and healthy pastures.

Jesus today uses the image of a shepherd and a sheepfold. He is not only the Good Shepherd, he is the gate to the sheepfold. This is an opportune moment to apply these images to our own time, our own weather, our own fields and ask ourselves are we good shepherds of our own patch of earth upon which depend the health not only of sheep, but of all crops, animals, and of all our children?

Nebraska is the home of Arbor Day, and I would like to quote from the President of the Arbor Foundation where he alerts us to the results of a poor shepherding of our natural resources, especially of our forests:

"We are walking through a beautiful forest, the trees lush and green, the air scented with pine,...we stoop to take cool water and quench our thirst...

(and this is the beginning of the clear water that we take for granted coming from our faucet at home.)

"Often that water originates in watershed areas hundreds of miles from our faucets where it undergoes a miraculous natural process of capture, storage, and purification.

How? Forest trees filter water through their canopies. Trees help soil around them absorb water and snow melt like a sponge so it can be released slowly over time. Tree roots hold soil in place, preventing soil erosion and preventing silt into our water supplies. And leaves and sticks form natural dams that slow the flow of water giving nature time to purify it on its way to our reservoirs.

Across our whole country our cities depend on this process to supply drinking water to 180 million people.

AND THESE FORESTS ARE BEING DEVASTATED AT AN ALARMING RATE:

In one decade: 72 million acres eliminated!"

And now the latest climate report. As the cop on Dragnet used to say: "Just the facts Mam!"

And the facts are in.

Climate Change is real and is happening all around us despite the denials of folks who deserve the title of "Know Nothings."

Here in Arizona, here are the FACTS: In recent decades the Southwest has warmed by an average of 2 degrees said Gregg Farin an Arizona U. geoscientist. The region will heat up by an additional 2.5 to 5.5 degrees by mid-century under the current trajectory of green house gas emissions and by 9.5 degrees by century's end.

"In the Southwest, climate change means water change." says Farin.

And Arizona and New Mexico have lost 20% of their forests in the last decade!...

From time immemorial Good Shepherds had two major priorities: clear and sufficient water for their flocks plus verdant pastures. LIFE depends on both for the sheep.

LIFE depends on both for us humans as well.

Fourth Sunday of Easter: GOOD SHEPHERD, 5/11/14

Written by Fr. Fitz
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Breakfast Question: Are you concerned about our forests? Visit arborday.org

Personal Reflection: Do you see a connection between climate concern and your spirituality?