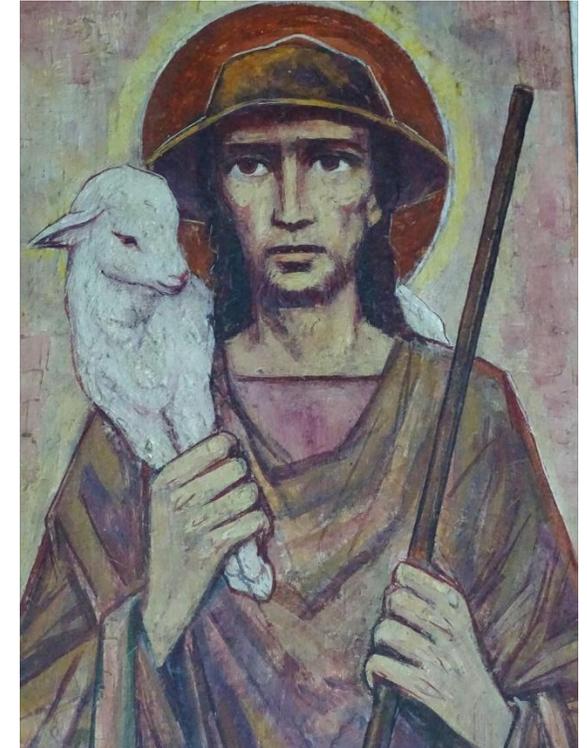


4.

Of good example was his busyness.  
But if some sinful one proved  
obstinate,  
Be who it might of high or low  
estate,  
Him he reproved and sharply as I  
know.  
There is nowhere a better priest, I  
trow.  
He had no thirst for pomp or  
reverence,  
Nor made himself a special, spiced  
conscience,  
But Christ's own lore, and his  
apostles twelve,  
He taught, but first he followed it  
himself.

## *The Parson*



A noble example to all  
Christians.

From The Canterbury Tales  
By Geoffrey Chaucer  
1343-1400

1.

There was a good man of religion,  
too,  
A country parson, poor, I warrant  
you;  
But rich he was in holy thought and  
work.  
He was a learned man also, a clerk,  
Who Christ's own gospel truly  
sought to preach;  
Devoutly his parishioners would he  
teach.  
Benign he was and wondrous  
diligent.  
Patient in adverse times and well  
content,  
As he was oft times proven; always  
blithe,  
He was right loath to curse to get a  
tithe,  
But rather would he give, in case of  
doubt,  
Unto those poor parishioners about,  
Part of his income, even of his  
goods.  
Enough with little, coloured all his  
moods.

2.

Wide was his parish, houses far  
asunder,  
But never did he fail, for rain or  
thunder,  
In sickness, or in sin, or any state,  
To visit to the farthest, small and  
great,  
Going afoot, and in his hand a  
stave.  
This fine example to his flock he  
gave,  
That first he wrought and afterwards  
he taught;  
Out of the gospel then that text he  
caught,  
And this figure he added thereunto-  
That, if gold rust, what shall poor  
iron do?  
For if the priest be foul, in whom we  
trust,  
What wonder if a layman yield to  
lust?  
And shame it is, if priest take  
thought for keep,  
A shitty shepherd, shepherding  
clean sheep.

3.

Well ought a priest example good  
to give,  
By his own cleanness how his flock  
should live.  
He never let his benefice for hire,  
Leaving his flock to flounder in the  
mire,  
And ran to London, up to old Saint  
Paul's,  
To get himself a chantry there for  
souls,  
But dwelt at home and kept so well  
the fold,  
That never wolf could make his  
plans miscarry,  
He was a shepherd and not  
mercenary.  
And holy though he was, and  
virtuous,  
To sinners he was not impetuous,  
Nor haughty in his speech, nor too  
divine,  
But in all teaching prudent and  
benign.  
To lead folk into heaven but by  
stress,