

Sunday Message

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year B • 21 April 2024 • Psalter Week 4

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND HIS SHEEP

JOHN 10: 11-18



The Gospel story indicated that Jesus does not surrender his life for his sheep, he lays it down. Out of love, he gives his life willingly. He said at the last supper that no one has a greater love than to lay down one's life for his friends. He did this not when we were redeemed or lovable, but when we weren't redeemed or lovable.

Scripture scholar Denis McBride points to the ways Jesus shepherds his flock: Jesus tackles his opponents face to face. He confronts those who steal the dignity of the little ones. He warns his followers about the rough terrain ahead. He goes there before them. He endures isolation and insult. He risks being slaughtered himself. He does lay his life down for his sheep.

The image of the Good Shepherd is a consoling one. Despite the events of Good Friday and the joy of Easter Sunday, Christ remains in the Church as our watchful protector. He knows his own and we know him. Through his care and protection, we are strengthened, and we preach his Word with confidence and courage. ■

REFLECT

We are reflecting on one of the most popular images in the Gospels. The pastoral care of the shepherd, who leads his large flock and protects them from harm. During the life and ministry of St. Alphonsus de Ligouri in Italy, it's interesting to note that his main work and energy went into ministering to shepherds, in the hills of southern Italy. They were a group of people who were forgotten about, or who existed on the periphery of society. In the time of Jesus, many herds consisted of thousands

of sheep, their sheer number requiring highly skilled people to look after them and know how to cure their ailments. The flocks spent most of the year on the vast open uplands, from March to mid-November and the winter was spent under cover. Hyenas, jackals and wolves roamed the hills, as well as robbers on two legs...and the shepherd was usually armed with a knife. The shepherds care and courage were legendary. Shepherding was a hazardous occupation and outdoor living was rough. During the long dry season,

they had to move their flocks in search of new pastures. It's no wonder that the image of the shepherd is used so many times by Jesus in the Gospels. They are the example of how to care and love and protect. They show exemplary strength and courage. And indeed, when we think of Jesus, when we see images of him on icons and stained-glass windows, the image of a lamb or a staff are not very far away. He is our shepherd. He knows us, we belong to him. ■

DO

How can we as followers of Christ become a Good Shepherd to our neighbour? What small gestures of love and charity can we make?



LEARN

'The Church is the visible plan of God's love for humanity because God desires that the whole human race may become one People of God, form one Body of Christ, and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit.'
(Paul VI, June 22, 1973)



SAY

'Be sure that you first preach by the way you live. If you do not, people will notice that you say one thing, but live otherwise, and your words will bring only cynical laughter and a derisive shake of the head.'

(Saint Charles Borromeo)

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God, lead us to a share in the joys of heaven, so that the humble flock may reach where the brave Shepherd has gone before. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 4:8-12

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter said: 'Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he was healed, then I am glad to tell you all, and would indeed be glad to tell the whole people of Israel, that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man is able to stand up perfectly healthy, here in your presence today. This is the stone rejected by you the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone. For of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 117 (118):1,8-9,21-23,26,28-29

Response: **The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.**
Or Alleluia!

1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love has no end. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in men: it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes. (R.)

2. I will thank you for you have given answer and you are my saviour. The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. This is the work of the Lord, a marvel in our eyes. (R.)
3. Blessed in the name of the Lord is he who comes. We bless you from the house of the Lord; I will thank you for you have given answer and you are my saviour. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his love has no end. (R.)

SECOND READING

1 John 3:1-2

A reading from the first letter of St John. Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is. The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my own sheep and my own know me. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 10:11-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. Jesus said: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock and one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.'

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (all bow during the next two lines) who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, we pray, O Lord, that we may always find delight in these paschal mysteries, so that the renewal constantly at work within us may be the cause of our unending joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd, and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures the sheep you have redeemed by the Precious Blood of your Son. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song. St John Paul II