

Read



Acts of the Apostles
13:14, 43-52

Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30

LIVING THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 12, 2019



REFLECTION

Sheep tend to travel in packs. Rarely do you see a rogue sheep in a field. In fact, if you go near the fence and surprise a flock of sheep, they will all run off together in one direction or simply run into each other as they scatter. Sheep need a shepherd to guide them or they will not be safe, find food, or be protected. Wolves will most certainly pounce without a shepherd. Jesus continues to remind us that he is our shepherd in John's account of the Gospel today. We are the sheep that need constant reassurance that Jesus gives us eternal life. Staying on our course of faith in God will help us reach heaven so we must follow him. However, unlike sheep, we each get to step out on our own and stand firm in our faith. We become like shepherds to each other. It is important that we stay on the path.

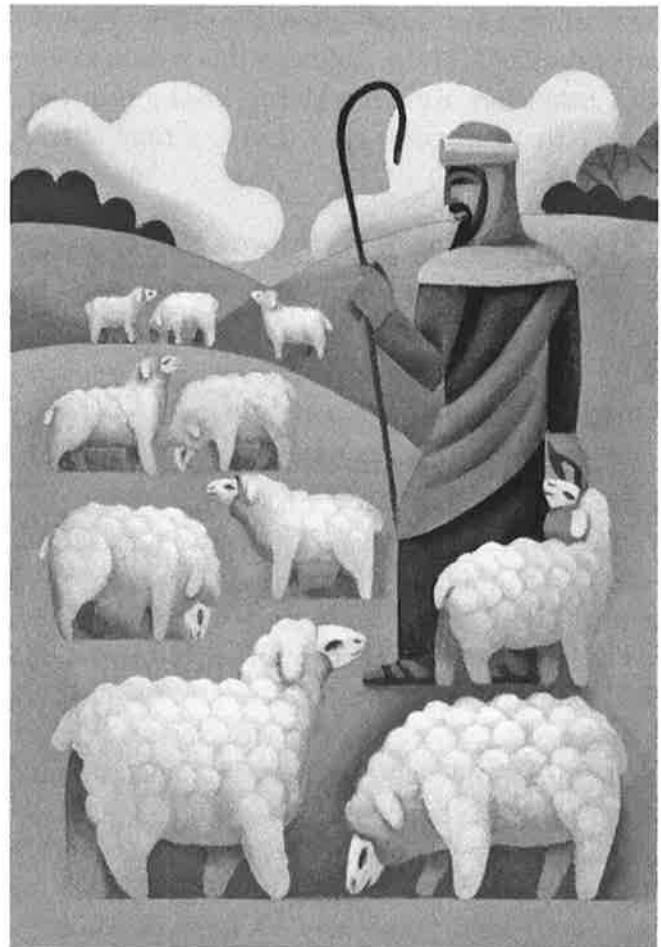
? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who helps to shepherd you on your faith journey?
- ❖ What qualities and values do these leaders or shepherds in your life hold dear?



ACTION

Write a letter of gratitude to someone who has helped shepherd you on your faith journey. In your letter, share how their leadership has influenced you to stay on the course and not stray from the flock. Thank them for their guidance. Offer your own prayer of gratitude at the end of your letter. If you can, hand deliver the letter or send it in the mail. Life often gets too busy to pause and recognize those in our life who make a difference. Take a leap of faith and share your gratitude today.





May 12, 2019

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #51C

Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43-52

Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

Today's readings, taken all together and at once, paint a picture of suffering and protection. In this middle point of the Easter Season, it's a great reminder that we sometimes face trials, both big and small, but are always under the perfect protection of the Lord. In the middle of this season of joy and celebration, we are asked to hone in on the struggle that can come even during a time of triumph and victory.

Q FOCUS: *We are God's beloved. He will always care for us with great affection and attention.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is traditionally Good Shepherd Sunday since in all three years of the Lectionary cycle, the Gospel on this day is about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Hearing the Shepherd's voice, followers recognize it as their God's. Safe in the knowledge that they cannot be taken from the hand of the Shepherd, those who hear his voice follow as faithful believers willing to go where God calls and sends them. When all the clamor of false voices and seductive distractions threaten to overwhelm, we have only to listen carefully to be led to do the work of the Father. This week also sees the feast of Our Lady of Fatima,

which celebrates the miraculous visions of three young children who were visited by the Blessed Mother in 1917. The message of Our Lady of Fatima was very straightforward and simple: pray. Look to the Lord for comfort, guidance, and above all else, pray to live and do his will. This fourth week of Easter is a perfect time to reflect upon that message.

Church Teaching Connection

"The church is, accordingly, a *sheepfold*, the sole and necessary entrance to which is Christ (see John 10:1-10). It is also a flock, of which God foretold that he would himself be the shepherd (see Isaiah 40:11; Ez 34:11), and whose sheep, although watched over by human shepherds, are nevertheless at all times led and brought to pasture by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd" (*Lumen gentium*, 6).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

John 10:27-30

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said: "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me,

is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► What does your mom's voice sound like?

That almost seems like a silly question . . . but think about it. In your head try to hear the voice of someone as familiar, well-known to you, and as close to you as your own mother.

► Why do you know your mom's voice so well? What is something she always says? Why is this easy to remember?

This is fascinating. Doctors and experts encourage pregnant parents to talk to their baby in the womb. As early as thirteen weeks, the baby can hear. When children are born, they recognize the voices of their mom and dad as those voices have become familiar and commonplace to them. They may not necessarily understand the words or complex sentences, but they hear the rhythm, cadence, and volume of their parents' voices and are able to recognize those as something comforting. Those voices are familiar to the newborn. The baby knows its parents not necessarily by sight or touch at first, but by sound. Babies know who will feed, clothe, bathe, and protect them, and when they hear the voices of their parents, babies will become alert, cry out of need, coo and giggle out of excitement, or smile with joy.

Today's readings are a stark reminder of how we, in a very real way, are like babies to God: we become familiar with his voice and are able to respond to it because we are his beloved children who have hopefully heard it time and time again.

(Because today's Gospel reading is so short, take a moment and read Acts 13:43–52 aloud to familiarize teens with the First Reading of today.)

Today's First Reading continues showing us the ministry and journeys of the Apostles as they establish the Church. They are met with the resistance and the frustration of many Jews who were not in favor of how this "new faith" was spreading. They were so upset by this "new faith" that they demanded that Paul and Barnabas stop preaching and teaching. If they didn't, there would be consequences.

► How do Paul and Barnabas respond to this request to stop preaching and teaching?

They are insistent that preaching the Word of God—letting other people hear the Lord's words—is remarkably important. No matter what, they will continue to do this. And they will preach to whomever will listen, whether to Jews ready to convert or Gentiles who are in need of the Truth.

► Do you think you'd have the courage to continue doing something even in the face of persecution? Why or why not?

► What do you think is the inspiration for Paul and Barnabas to endure the suffering and hardship that will come to them?

We get this answer in the Gospel today: they are held in the hand of the Lord, who is mighty and strong and a protector to his faithful servants, no matter what.

► What does Jesus compare himself to?

Jesus is a shepherd, one who guides, leads, and directs the steps of an animal that is instinctively herd-based. Sheep don't travel alone. In fact, the very word "sheep" is both singular and plural all at once. A sheep travels with other sheep and they move under the guidance and care of a shepherd, who brings them to verdant pastures and ensures that they are kept safe in the dead of night.

► Who are the sheep? What do they instinctively and implicitly know? Whom do they follow?

► Do you consider yourself one of the Lord's sheep? Why or why not?

► Would Paul and Barnabas be sheep in the Lord's flock? Why or why not?

The shepherd (Jesus) guides the sheep (us) to abundant life. He provides for us, nourishes us, protects us, ensures our well-being, and keeps us in his sight so that we are never far from the path he wants us to take. No matter what suffering, persecution, or pain may come to pass (the example of this is in the First Reading), the sheep that are aware of the voice of the shepherd are safe.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points as you conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 192.

We are guided, led, nourished, fed, and protected by the Shepherd—Christ—who has taken us into his loving arms to ensure that we are safe.

We are so cared for and loved by Jesus. Jesus wants us in his flock, and will do whatever it takes to ensure we are close to him.

Though we sometimes stray from the flock and get lost on the path, especially in a secular world with all manner of things that fight for our attention and seek to push us off track, we should constantly return to the loving hand of the one who guides us without fail. It is no small task to be a sheep of the Shepherd, and we should be honored and respond always in faith to that great gift.

Act on the Word

You will need clip art images of sheep, scissors, pens or pencils, and Bibles.

Find a clip art image of a sheep online (something simple that can easily be cut out) and print out enough copies for the teens to have their own and cut out. Instruct the teens to cover their sheep in words that describe a good shepherd. The more words they come up with, the easier the second part will be. After they've come up with a number of descriptive words of a good shepherd, have each teen begin searching through Scripture (especially the Gospel accounts) to find specific examples of when Jesus exhibits these traits. For example: a good shepherd provides food and so the teens might pick the account of the feeding of the five thousand. You will need to have Bibles on hand for teens to use. Give teens a few minutes to work on this project. When they are finished, form small groups. Teens should share with each other the Scripture stories and how it relates to their words describing a good shepherd. Then, ask teens to share an experience when they have felt Jesus shepherding them.

Closing Prayer

*Our God and Shepherd,
you know us and the paths we take.
May we always seek you out in both our joys
and sorrows,
always desiring to hear your voice.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.