

Read

Acts 2:14a, 36–41

Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4,
5, 6

1 Peter 2:20b–25

John 10:1–10



REFLECTION

What is the purpose of the gate around the sheep? Is it there to keep them from the danger posed by an unsafe environment, wild animals, and poachers? The sheep learn to trust the shepherd to keep them safe when leading them out of the gate to pasture, and they trust that only safe people will be allowed to come in the gate.

Your previous or current school may also have security procedures that call for visitors to check in and out before coming and going. These rules and physical boundaries are there to ensure that nobody is able to kidnap or hurt a child. What would you think if you saw someone trying to bypass these rules by sneaking in through a window or an emergency exit? You'd probably assume they were up to no good! In the same way, the sheep in Jesus' parable are frightened when a stranger comes over the wall. Jesus says that anyone who climbs over the wall instead of walking through the gate is up to no good. Trustworthy people know how to respect boundaries!

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ When we are young, the adults around us are responsible for setting boundaries to protect us. Can you think of some rules and restrictions that you can now see were meant to protect you?
- ❖ Jesus calls himself the "gate" in this parable. How can Christ's teachings and the example of his life offer us sanctuary or help us discern whom to trust?

LIVING THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 30, 2023

ACTION

It can be hard to know where to draw our boundaries and whom to let inside. Think about a time you felt unsafe. What was the chain of events that led to that situation? For each step, note whether someone ignored or tested the limits you set to protect your body, your heart, your time, or your values. Ask Jesus to give you the wisdom to discern when to open your gate and the strength to run from anyone who tries to climb in over the side.



**Boundaries:
A Guide for Teens**
by Val J. Peter and
Tom Dowd



April 30, 2023

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #49A

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalms 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

1 Peter 2:20b-25

John 10:1-10

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

Jesus uses the familiar imagery of a shepherd and sheep to teach his disciples an important lesson. He is also teaching the Pharisees the same lesson. Sheep follow their shepherd because they recognize his or her voice. Jesus likens himself to being that shepherd for his followers: his voice and his ways lead us to the kingdom of God. Jesus also likens himself to a gate, which leads to salvation. Therefore, we must believe in God and listen to Jesus' teachings and follow his way in order to be admitted to the gates of heaven.

Q FOCUS: *When we listen to the voice of the Shepherd, we come to know God and enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On May 1, the Church celebrates the feast of St. Joseph the Worker. This is the St. Joseph of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. He known under this title because of the silent witness of his work that provided for Jesus and Mary. This is an important celebration because it also calls to our attention all those who perform manual labor and the value of all who work. The Church has much to say about the dignity of work in many papal encyclicals, such as *Rerum novarum*.

Church Teaching Connection

"The church is . . . a *sheepfold*, the sole and necessary entrance to which is Christ (see Jn 10:1-10). It is also a flock, of which God foretold that he would himself be the shepherd (see Is 40:11; Ez 34:11 ff.), 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 and prince of shepherds (see Jn 10:11; 1 Pet 5:4), who gave his life for his sheep (see Jn 10:11-15)" (*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 10:1-10

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: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of

speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

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:

In many Gospel passages, Jesus utilizes images and examples that are familiar to the people to whom he is speaking. While in our modern world, we might not have an experience of shepherds and caring for sheep, the Pharisees would have known many things about shepherding practices in the ancient world. Jesus uses this imagery as an analogy for what belief in Christ will achieve for someone. Don't be offended that Jesus calls his followers "sheep." This often can be understood negatively, such as sheep who follow blindly behind each other, heading down a dangerous path. Again, Jesus is utilizing a familiar image for the people to understand.

► What might be an image that could be used in this parable that would make it more recognizable today and to teens?

We can view the gate to reach the sheep as the gate to eternal life, the gate to the kingdom of heaven, to which we are all aspiring. Jesus is the gate. Those who came before him and claimed to be the messiah,

they are like thieves and robbers, trying to take the sheep off course.

Jesus tells the Pharisees these things, and the Gospel writer comments that the Pharisees did not understand. In some ways, the Pharisees are like the thieves and robbers, trying to tell the Jewish people how to live strictly by the rules, but not really knowing God in their hearts.

Jesus knows that the true way to conversion and belief is through a relationship with God. Jesus demonstrates the importance of this relationship throughout the Gospel accounts. Here, he states very clearly that he is the way to encounter God and be in relationship with him. He came to give life.

► What are some of the ways that you have a relationship with Jesus? How can you follow him more closely?

If Jesus is the gate through which we all enter, then it follows that we must listen to his teachings and embody them in our lives. We desire to have eternal life with God, and in order to enter through that gate, we begin with our belief in God. This faith leads us to a deeper understanding of what it means to be a follower of Christ. It inspires us to find more ways to encounter him and to share his presence with others. We are to care for our brothers and sisters, feed the hungry, visit the sick, and perform the works of mercy. We are to pray unceasingly for the needs of others, the needs of the world, and our own needs.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 172.

Many people who have come before Jesus and will come after will try to claim to be the messiah.

Belief in Jesus is the gate through which we enter into the kingdom of God.

Belief in Jesus demands that we act according to Jesus' teachings.

Act on the Word

The Works of Mercy

For this activity, you will need a copy/listing of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy listed below, newsprint for several small groups, and markers.

Jesus came so that we might know how to show compassion and love to our brothers and sisters, and in this way, follow him along the path that leads to eternal life. In today's activity, we will learn about the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and discuss ways to put them into action with the teens' daily lives and in your group.

The corporal works of mercy:

- * Feed the hungry
- * Give drink to the thirsty
- * Shelter the homeless
- * Visit the sick
- * Visit the prisoners
- * Bury the dead
- * Give alms to the poor

The spiritual works of mercy:

- * Counsel the doubtful
- * Instruct the ignorant
- * Admonish the sinner
- * Comfort the sorrowful
- * Forgive injuries
- * Bear wrongs patiently
- * Pray for the living and the dead

On the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website, there are great examples of how to live both kinds of works of mercy out in modern

times (<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/the-corporal-works-of-mercy> and <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/the-spiritual-works-of-mercy>). You might want to share some of these ideas with the teens to help them in their brainstorming.

Divide the young people into small groups. Each group should have two pieces of newsprint. The teens can copy down the corporal works of mercy on one piece of newsprint and the spiritual works of mercy on the other. Invite them to think about how they might be able to perform these works of mercy in their everyday lives. They can write down some ideas. When they are finished, discuss as a large group some of the ideas that they came up with. If any of the ideas are suited for a group project, plan to do that during or in place of one of your upcoming gatherings.

Closing Prayer

*We are your flock, O God,
and trusting in your unconditional
providence,*

*we seek to walk with your Son,
who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

*Be with us on our journey to the abundant
life of your kingdom,
where you live and reign with him,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.*

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.