

Read

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

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

1 Peter 2:20b-25

John 10:1-10

LIVING THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2020



REFLECTION

We can thank our elementary school English teachers in special way after reading today's Gospel. Because of our teachers, we know that a simile is a comparison using the words *like* or *as*. This comparison between two unlike objects allows the reader to better understand the meaning of some unknown object through comparison to something that is well known. Because we know this, we know that Jesus is not using simile or any other form of figurative language to convey his point. Jesus says that he is the gate for the sheep. In Jesus' time, shepherds would literally sleep at the entryway of the animal pen to protect their flock. Jesus tells his disciples that he takes on this same role. Gates not only protect but also provide an access point to something else. In this case, Jesus is the gate or the way to the Father. Jesus not like a gate that opens the way. Jesus himself is the way to eternal life.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Jesus says that the sheep always know the voice of the shepherd. Is this true for you as a follower of Jesus? Are you always able to recognize Jesus' voice?
- ❖ What are some things that possibly prevent you from hearing the voice of Jesus in your life today?



ACTION

In John's account of the Gospel, Jesus uses a number of "I am" statements to describe himself, one of which is the gate for the sheep. What are some other images that you would use to describe Jesus? Use your imagination and create a visual representation using modeling clay. Then, place your visual in a place that you will see it each day to remind yourself of the unchanging presence of Jesus in your life.





May 3, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

LECTIONARY #49A

Acts of the Apostles 2:14a, 36-41

Psalm 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

In today's Gospel, Jesus says he is "the gate for the sheep" (John 10:7). While this pastoral analogy might have been very relatable in Jesus' own time, it is an image that most teenagers today will not be able to understand since many do not have experience with farm life.

Q FOCUS: *To be Christian disciples and leaders.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Display the liturgical calendar and point out the Fourth Sunday of Easter. Today is known as Good Shepherd Sunday, as the Gospel in all three years of the liturgical cycle draws a connection between Jesus and shepherds.

Church Teaching Connection

Pope Francis emphasizes leadership that involves cooperation between all church ministers. In one of his first public statements, Francis implored clergy to "be shepherds with the smell of the sheep" (Homily given during the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday, March 28, 2013). In other words, he wants leaders who are disciples *with* their congregations

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:

Today, Jesus compares himself to the gate for the sheep; the gate through whom each of us encounters our God. On this Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, the Gospel always centers around the same image, and so it is called Good Shepherd Sunday. The image of sheep and shepherd was likely something relatable to the Israelites. Although their culture was not as dependent on livestock as the Jewish people of the Old Testament, sheep and goats (and those who tended them) were still a notable part of Judean society.

The image of the shepherd is particularly fitting for Christ. Shepherds guarded their flocks with their lives—protecting them from both predators and thieves. Jesus acted in the same way, giving up his life not just for his followers, but for all of humankind. However, in this reading Jesus doesn't call himself a shepherd; he says that he is “the gate for the sheep” (John 10:9).

► What does this mean?

Jesus and his teachings are the way—the path—to salvation. But if Jesus is meant to be the gate, then who is the shepherd in this instance? The answer is that we, the Church, the disciples of Christ, are

called to be both sheep and shepherd. We are meant to follow Christ *and* to lead one another to Christ.

► Can you name an instance when you were both “sheep” and “shepherd,” both a leader and follower, at the same time?

Let's unpack these two roles. You may have a sense of what it means to follow Christ—how we disciples practice and strive to follow the example the Jesus gave us.

► But what does it mean to be a shepherd for one another?

It can sometimes be easy for us to think of shepherding as leadership: we are leading one another toward something. But we can also fall into the trap of viewing leadership as simply telling people what to do or how to act. This reading offers a different image. Jesus tells us that the shepherd “walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice.” So, our leadership or shepherding requires us to “walk the walk” before we can instruct others.

► Do you know someone in your life who leads by “walking the walk”; somebody who really leads by example?

► As you think about “walking the walk” when it comes to being Christlike in your own life, how do you feel?

► Is that something you already do, or something that sounds challenging to you, or both?

One part of Jesus' message that might be easy to miss is his telling us that the sheep follow the shepherd because they know the shepherds voice.

► What does that tell us?

It tells us that being disciples *and* being leaders are both matters of relationship. To be shepherds, we have to get to know those who we are walking with. And because we are both leaders *and* followers on this journey of following Christ, we have to treat each person we meet with respect and dignity. In this way, we become companions on a journey through Christ, the gate that leads us to the kingdom.

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 184.

How would you describe your relationship with Christ?

How do you let Christ shepherd you in your life?

Who are people who you might be called to help shepherd on their faith journey? Do you feel that you know them, and that they know you?

Act on the Word

Trust Walk (with a Twist!)

You will want a large space for this activity. Ideally this should be done outdoors, but it may also be done in a larger indoor facility. For materials, you will need some items to serve as objects to be found in a scavenger hunt. The nature or type of object is up to you, but the important factor is that they are in distinct sets (whether numbered/colored/and so on) of at least four to six per set. Because it is Good Shepherd Sunday, objects or items to be scavenged could be sheep-themed, or could have quotes from today's Gospel reading printed on them.

Have the students get into pairs or groups of three for this activity. The trust walk can be done with blindfolds as an option, but it is also acceptable to ask students to close or cover their eyes when they are being "led" (see below). In this trust walk, each pair or group has the task of finding a complete set of whatever objects you are using for the scavenger hunt. (Logistically, it is easier to use different colors or numbers to indicate given sets; that is, each group must collect a #1 item, a #2 item, and so on. Make sure there are as many sets as there are groups.)

As a twist, only one person in a pair or group is allowed to see where they are going at any time. That person will lead their partner(s) carefully while the partner(s) are blindfolded or covering their eyes. Once the pair or group has found an item for their set, they should switch the person who is leading. Each person should lead and be led at least twice, so if you students are paired, there should be at least four items to collect. If students

are in groups of three, there should be at least six items to collect.

Say out loud: "For this activity, you and your partner(s) will have to complete a scavenger hunt. But because sometimes we are sheep and sometimes we are shepherds, each of you will take turns leading your team. Only one of you will be able to see where you are going at a time, and it will be that person's responsibility to 'shepherd' your team to collect the next item in the scavenger hunt. Every time your group finds an item for the scavenger hunt, your team will switch who is leading and who is following. As you are doing this exercise, pay attention to what is challenging about this activity. What challenges do you face when leading others? What challenges do you face when being led? Finally, make sure to be safe and keep each other safe."

Depending on your location, it is advisable to go into greater detail about safety concerns in your given location.

After all the pairs or groups have completed the task, ask students to share what they experienced—including challenges. Some may find it frustrating, others may find it silly. The important idea to drive home is that our faith journey is one in which sometimes we are expected to lead the way, and sometimes we should be following another.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd,
you have called us by name and we are yours.
May we express our faith in you by our love and
care for others in your flock.
You live and reign for ever and ever.
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.