

April 21, 2024

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

READING I *Acts 4:8-12*

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said: "Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed. He is *the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone*. There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29 (22)*

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.
or: Alleluia.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes. R.

I will give thanks to you, for you have
answered me
and have been my savior.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes. R.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to you,
for you have answered me
and have been my savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his kindness endures forever. R.

READING II *1 John 3:1-2*

Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

GOSPEL *John 10:11-18*

Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father."

Practice of Charity

Every Fourth Sunday of Easter the Gospel passage presents Jesus as the Good Shepherd. ♦ Choose an image in your home or from the internet in which Jesus is portrayed as a shepherd. Spend time reflecting on the image. Conclude with your own prayer to Jesus, our shepherd. ♦ Do you know why we have the readings that we do each Sunday? For a deeper appreciation of the lectionary, read the introduction at the beginning of *At Home with the Word*. ♦ During the Easter season many parishes celebrate first Communion and confirmation, moments that strengthen the younger members of God's flock. Offer to help with one of these events. If the parish is hosting a reception, offer to assist with the setup or cleanup after the event.

Download more questions and activities for families, initiation groups, and other adult groups at <http://www.ltp.org/ahw>.

Scripture Insights

In contrast to “the hired hand” who only watches out for oneself and does not really care about the sheep (John 10:12–13), John's Jesus is willing to die for the protection and well-being of his sheep (John 10:18). Given the presence of thieves, bandits, and wolves (John 10:1, 7, 10, 12), “the good shepherd” has a dangerous job. There are attempts to stone Jesus both before and after today's passage (John 8:59; 10:31). The phrase “lay down . . . life” appears five times in this passage of eight verses.

Unlike “the hired hand” who seeks to exclude (remember how the religious leaders “drove out” the man born blind whom John's Jesus cures in John 9:34–35), “the good shepherd” seeks to enlarge his sheepfold. After stating that Jesus' sheep know him just as Jesus knows them in ways similar to the mutual knowing between Jesus and his Father (John 10:14–15; see also 10:4), Jesus states that “other sheep” will need to be introduced to and included in his sheepfold, which is characterized by its oneness (John 10:16). We, as sheep in the sheepfold, also do not get to decide who belongs and does not belong. Instead, we need to strive for unity in diversity, keeping in mind the goal of being “one flock” under “one shepherd” that is expressed in John 10:16.

John 10:17–18 identifies another motivation for the good shepherd's willingness to die for the flock: in addition to a genuine care for the safety and welfare of the sheep, Jesus acts out of a loyal and loving relationship with God.

- ♦ What Scriptures from the Old Testament come to mind when you read about sheep and shepherd in today's Gospel passage?
- ♦ Read John 10:19–21, which concludes this account. What do you make of the response of the people after hearing Jesus talk about “one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16)? What is the significance of these last verses?
- ♦ Who may be “the other sheep” that we need to include in the divine sheepfold today?