

4th SUNDAY OF EASTER

Our Shepherd

God the Father,
you are our shepherd,
who offer us green pastures,
and life-giving water.
Through love and kindness,
you lead your flock
to a restful place.
With your tender touch,
you cast away our fears.
There is nothing we want
but to remain by your side.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Sunday, April 21, 2024

The Good Shepherd



Today's readings: Acts 4:8–12; Psalm 118:1, 8–9, 21–23, 26, 28, 29; 1 John 3:1–2; John 10:11–18. When you see the Good Shepherd depicted in art, do you see yourself as the lamb? Do you see yourself as one to be protected, guided, and comforted? Or do you think the lamb reflects only a child? Imagining yourself as the lamb will provide insight into who God is for you. “I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me,” Jesus says. This portrayal reveals the intimacy of our relationship with God. God knows us and has given us the capacity to know him.

The shepherd is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. The Good Shepherd has already done this for us,

dying on the cross so that we may have eternal life. A hired hand, however, does not have this connection to the sheep; he would not sacrifice his life for the flock. This man “sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away.”

Our Shepherd is with us—in our loneliness and sorrow as well as in our joy. Spend a few minutes in quiet, imagining yourself with the Good Shepherd in a green pasture. Let him hear not only your voice but your deepest desires. Seek to expand your quiet prayer time this week so that you might hear the Good Shepherd’s voice. Remember your relationship with the Good Shepherd grows as you make space for him in your life.



This Week at Home

Monday, April 22

In silence

“The sheep follow him because they recognize his voice.” John’s gospel portrays the Lord as intimately connected to his followers. They know his voice. He has come so that “they might have life and have it more abundantly.” To better hear God’s voice, we pause our busy lives. Where you might have even a few minutes in a day to listen to God. Today’s readings: Acts 11:1–18; Ps. 42:2–3; 43:3–4; John 10:1–10.

Tuesday, April 23

Listen

In today’s gospel, we hear that people continue to badger Jesus to prove he is indeed the Son of God. “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly,” they say. These people are among those who do not recognize the shepherd’s voice. Once the sheep are in the flock, Jesus says, “No one can take them [sheep] out of the Father’s hands. The Father and I are one.” In coming chapters of the gospel of John, we will hear Jesus yearn for that same unity with humankind. Today’s readings: Acts 11:19–26; Psalm 87:1–7; John 10:22–30.

Wednesday, April 24

Obeying the Spirit

Today’s account from Acts shows Barnabas and Saul sailing to Cyprus to spread the Good News. They wasted no time in responding to the Holy Spirit, who told the community, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” How does your community help people discern their gifts and their mission in the Church? Is there anyone you can meet with in your congregation to help you discern your calling to serve the Church and the world? Today’s readings: Acts 12:24–13:5a; Psalm 67:2–8; John 12:44–50.

Thursday, April 25

Commemoration of Mark, apostle and evangelist

On St. Mark day, we hear in the gospel, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature.” Mark is believed to be the disciple referred to in Acts as “John who is called Mark” (12:25) and the son of Mary of Jerusalem, who opened her home to the disciples. Tradition holds that he met Peter, Paul, and other disciples in his mother’s home and then joined them in evangelizing. Today’s readings: 1 Peter 5:5b–14; Psalm 89:2–7, 16–17; Mark 16:15–20.

Friday, April 26

Always loving

With Thomas voicing confusion, Jesus lovingly replies, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” Thomas had followed Jesus for years and still questioned where the Lord was leading the disciples. Believers live with questions. Whether your faith is new or lifelong, you may at times be unsure of the spiritual path you are to follow. Jesus offers assurance that he is not only the way but the truth and the life. Today’s readings: Acts 13:26–33; Psalm 2:6–11; John 14:1–6.

Saturday, April 27

Holy presence

“Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us,” Philip tells Jesus. There is a Philip in all of us, looking for reassurance of the presence of God in our lives. Sometimes we ask God for a sign to calm our fears. Jesus directs Philip and us to look not only to his words but his works. Where do you see the work of God in your community? Is there someone who needs reassurance that God is present during struggles? Today’s readings: Acts 13:44–52; Ps. 98:1–4; John 14:7–14.