

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year C
17 April 2016
John 10:27-30

Catechist Background

In each year, the gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Easter focuses on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. This year's selection is rather short, but contains some powerful messages and imagery.

First century Palestinian shepherding practice is not as intimately familiar to us today as it was to Jesus' first listeners. Shepherds were not the most genteel members of society, but the safety of the sheep—and of the food source of the people—was dependent on shepherds doing their job well. Shepherds would face many dangers in looking after the sheep, and would run great risks defending them from predators. Unlike most modern European shepherds, those in Jesus' day would lead their flocks from the front, rather than chasing them from the back. Then, as now, many of a shepherd's duties are 'earthy' (removing encrusted faeces from the wool, attending to wounded or sickly sheep, lambing, etc.).

Setting the Scene

For the activity below, you will need to have a stick puppet of a sheep for each child. You could make them by attaching a paper or card sheep-shape to a lolly stick or pencil. Sheep are easy to draw; draw a cloud and put legs and a head on it! Otherwise, children's colouring books will often have a good sheep to use as a template. You will also need one puppet to be 'the Father' and one to be the 'Good Shepherd.'

The children will need materials to decorate the sheep with.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You come for us when we have strayed, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You draw us to yourself, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Your know each one of us, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Dear God, help us to understand that Jesus, your Son, is our Good Shepherd, and just like a sheep is safe when with a shepherd, so we are safe when we follow Jesus.

Amen.

Gospel Intro

It may be helpful, particularly to children who have little agricultural background, explain a bit about a shepherd and what a shepherd's role entails in looking after sheep.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 10:27-30

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- In what ways does Jesus act like a shepherd to us?
- What are some of the things that we do to act like good sheep?
- What are some of the things that we do to act like misbehaving sheep?
- What does a good shepherd do when the sheep are in trouble? What does Jesus do for us?

Response

Give each child a sheep puppet to decorate; spotted sheep and stripey sheep are fine! Older children might like to decorate the sheep with symbols of their interests or hobbies or personal characteristics to deepen the symbolism of them being the sheep.

Allow the children to enact a brief puppet show of The Father giving the sheep to the Shepherd, and the Shepherd leading them. If you have enough room, they could be physically led around the space that you use.

We Believe

Relating to the creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do, Alleluia, Alleluia!'

- Do you believe in God the Father, who gives us to Jesus' care?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who looks after us and has given his life for us?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to follow the Good Shepherd?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'We know Jesus leads us in our hearts, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for all those who have jobs of telling others about Jesus, may they always lead people to Jesus and not away from him. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all world leaders, that they also look after the people they are responsible for. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all people who are far away from home. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anybody in our parish community who is feeling a little sad or lost inside. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, we know we are sometimes wander away from where we should go. Help keep us on the safe path of following Jesus. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

