

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

YEAR A

### PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Loving Lord,  
you sent Jesus to give us  
real life—your life.  
Because we belong to you,  
help us live as your children  
and follow Jesus  
by loving others and caring  
for those who need help.  
As his sisters and brothers,  
may we always recognize  
his voice when he calls us  
and leads us to you.  
We ask you to do this  
through that very same Jesus,  
who lives with you,  
forever and ever.

### FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Both readings focus on hearing and following the call of God in Jesus.

The first reading is the end of Peter's speech which proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus. The heart of the story is the response to Peter's message, "What should we do now?" As always, the repentant sinner finds forgiveness and salvation awaiting his or her acceptance of Christ.

The Gospel parable of the Good Shepherd focuses on hearing and recognizing the voice of God. Those who seek honestly will recognize in Jesus the voice of God and will follow because Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will lead them to "a full and happy life."

### REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

The imagery of "shepherd and sheep" may not be familiar to all children. Because this image is so profound in scripture, it will be worth taking time to

### FIRST READING: Acts 2:14, 36-41

*This is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles.*

After they received the Holy Spirit,  
the apostles stood in front of the people,  
and Peter said,

"All the people of Israel must now be told,  
and must know for sure,  
that God has raised Jesus up  
and made him Lord and Christ.  
This is the same Jesus whom you killed."

When the people heard this,  
they were very upset  
and asked Peter and the other apostles,

"What should we do now?"

Peter said to them,

"Show that you are sorry  
by changing your lives.  
Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.  
He will forgive your sins,  
and you will receive the Holy Spirit.  
The promise he made is for you  
and for your children,  
and for all people everywhere."

About 3,000 people believed in what Peter said  
and were baptized that day.

*The Word of the Lord.*

### RESPONSE: Psalm 118

RESPONSE:

This day was made by the Lord, let us re-joice,  
let us be glad! let us re-joice in sal-va-tion!

VERSE: Leader

The stone which the build-ers re-ject-ed — is the Cor-ner-stone,—

All: (clap) — is the Cor-ner-stone.— I will pro-claim the won-ders you do!

to Response

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"I am the Good Shep-herd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me." Al - le - lu - ia!"

## GOSPEL: *John 10:1-5, 10*

*This is a reading from the Gospel of John.*

One day Jesus said,

"I tell you the truth,  
the one who comes into the sheepfold  
through the door is the shepherd.  
But anyone who tries to climb  
in some other way,  
must be a thief and a robber.  
The sheep hear the shepherd's voice  
when he calls each one by name.  
He leads them out, and they follow him  
because they know his voice.  
The sheep will not follow  
the voice of a stranger but will run away.  
The thief comes only to steal and kill.  
But I came so that you will have life—  
a full and happy life."

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

introduce the children to it. In this instance, it may be useful to have pictures of shepherds and sheep today so that children become acquainted with this pastoral scene outside the context of the scriptures. Introduce the children to the meaning of words such as sheepfold, pasture, and so forth.

Even today, it is the shepherd who walks in front of the sheep, leading them from pasture to pasture. As he calls to them, they follow him. When the children see this as part of ordinary, real life, the power of this Gospel—that Jesus is the Good Shepherd—will be real enough to touch their hearts. But for children who are outside of a rural or pastoral setting, the images related to shepherding need to be visual in order to avoid remaining abstract.

Ask the children to identify what the shepherd does and what the sheep do. This may be done as follows:

Shepherd	Sheep
calls	hear
leads	follow
gives life	live happily (in safety)

The life of the sheep is dependent on the shepherd who leads them from pasture to pasture where they will find sufficient food and who leads them home to the sheepfold in the evening so that they will be protected and safe. So it is the Good Shepherd who gives life to the sheep.

Ask the children how we can hear the voice of Jesus today. Help them remember the first reading. Help them see that it was Peter who spoke to the people and who called them to become followers of Jesus.

Ask the children who tells them about Jesus: parents, teachers, priests and other ministers. Help the children see that these people are shepherds in the church today, as were Jesus and Peter. Jesus continues to be our Good Shepherd through others.

Today is Vocation Day. Explain to the children that the word "vocation" means "a calling." The church throughout the world prays together today—on Good Shepherd Sunday—that we will have many women and men who want to become shepherds for us in the church today—people who will be good teachers, parents, ordained ministers and religious. Just as a shepherd leads the sheep, Jesus calls people today to lead his people. When we follow his voice, we are promised a full and happy life.