

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

YEAR B

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:

The mission of the church is to shepherd: to preach, to heal and to give witness with our lives.

Our Gospel presents the Good Shepherd as one who is both gentle and powerful. He leads his flock by the sound of his voice. The Good Shepherd has "power to lay down his life and the power to raise it up again." He is willing to die rather than abandon his sheep.

When the disciples claim the power of the Risen Lord by healing a crippled man, they are put in jail. Peter proclaims that it is by the power of the "name of Jesus" that the man was healed. It is a sign of the resurrection. "You crucified him. But God raised him from the dead."

Continued healing and preaching are signs that the Good Shepherd is among us.

FIRST READING: Acts 4:8-12

This is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Peter, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke up and said:

Leaders of the people, you have put us in jail, and now you want us to explain to you how this crippled man was healed. We tell you, and all the people of Israel, that this man was healed by the name of Jesus Christ.

He is the same Jesus you crucified, but God raised him from the dead. And so, he is like a stone which you builders didn't want. But this stone has now become the cornerstone, which holds up the whole building!

And by the power of the name of Jesus, this man has been healed. Jesus is the Savior, and only in his name are we saved.

This is 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.

VERSES: Leader

1. The stone which the build-ers re-ject-ed... is the Cor-ner-stone.
2. You have shown mer-cy and pow-er; you have giv-en rise

ALL: Israel

1. ... is the Cor-ner-stone... I will pro-claim the won-ders you do!
2. You have giv-en rise to us.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

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

GOSPEL: John 10:11-18

This is a reading from the Gospel of John.
Jesus said,

I am the Good Shepherd.
The Good Shepherd
is even willing to die for the sheep.
A person who is only hired
to watch the sheep,
and doesn't own them,
runs away when a wolf comes,
and leaves the sheep to be snatched
and scattered by the wolf.
A person like that
is working only for money,
and doesn't really care about the sheep.
But I am the Good Shepherd.
God knows me and I know God.
And in the same way,
I know my sheep and my sheep know me.
And I am willing to die for my sheep.
[I have other sheep
who aren't in this flock yet.
I must lead them too,
and they will listen to my voice.
Then there will be only one flock
with one shepherd.]
God loves me
because I am willing to die for my sheep.
No one makes me give up my life,
I give it up freely.
I have the power to raise it up again.
[This is what God commanded me to do.]

This is the Good News of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Before the Gospel, ask the children what they know about sheep and shepherds. Have they ever seen sheep with a shepherd? For many children, especially those living in cities or suburbs, the image of sheep and shepherd will not be a familiar one. It is a powerful and frequently used image in both the Old and New Testaments. It will be well worth the time to familiarize the children with both the shepherding of Jesus' time and of today. Perhaps you will find pictures or even a short film on shepherding today.

The image rests on the reality of the intimacy that exists between sheep and their shepherd. Even today, where sheep are tended, they respond to the voice of the shepherd who leads them to the sheepfold at night and, in the morning, to good pastures. A true shepherd is different from a "hired hand." It is this intimacy and care that Jesus speaks of here.

After the Gospel, ask the children to recall what they heard. Help them to recall that Jesus, like the true shepherd, will never leave us. He will always care for us, even when we are in danger. Even when we are afraid, he is not afraid. He is even willing to die rather than leave us.

Jesus said that he wants everyone to listen to his voice. How do we listen to his voice today? Ask the children who tells them about Jesus: parents, teachers, priests and other ministers. Help them to see that these people are shepherds in the church today. Jesus continues to be our Good Shepherd through these people. Jesus wants everyone in the whole world to be united as sisters and brothers. Jesus called this "one flock of sheep with one shepherd."

How can we help everyone to be united as "one flock"?

- at home?
- at school?
- in groups to which we belong?
- in our neighborhood?

You may wish to conclude by singing the Psalm Response again.