

**Liturgy of the Word with Children**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year B**  
**21<sup>st</sup> April 2024**  
**John 10: 11-18**

### **Catechist Background**

Every year on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, we hear a portion of Jesus' discourse from John's Gospel on the theme of the Good Shepherd. Strictly speaking, this is not a parable; Jesus does not say he is *like* a good shepherd, he states 'I AM the Good Shepherd'. Preceding this section in John's Gospel, we are shown that the Pharisees are bad shepherds of the people of Israel, unable either to do anything for the man born blind or to rejoice in Jesus' healing of him. The Pharisees are thus shown in contrast to Jesus. In addition, the Pharisees' obsessive concern with following the minutiae (the precise detail) of each letter of the Law to the exclusion of others is at odds with Jesus' teaching. Jesus states explicitly that he has come to gather other 'folds' of sheep as well as to gather the Jews. He comes to gather everyone (Gentiles and Jews) into one flock. Salvation is for everyone because Christ loves us all and wants to bring us all to the Father.

### **Setting the Scene**

To aid the reflection in the manner described below, you will need stick puppets (for example figures cut out and glued to lolly sticks,) to represent sheep, the shepherd, the hired hand, and wolves. (See Google Images as there is some excellent clipart available) For the 'response' activity, you will need a simple costume to dress up in as a shepherd. A pashmina to quickly throw over your head and a long stick can be surprisingly effective!

### **We Say Sorry**

Leader: Lord Jesus, You are our Shepherd, Lord have mercy.

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You lead us in love, Christ have mercy.

**All: Christ, have mercy.**

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

**All: Lord, have mercy.**

### **Gloria**

### **We Pray (1)**

God, help us always to follow Jesus, our shepherd, in every part of our life. Amen.

### **Gospel Intro**

**Gospel Acclamation** To highlight the significance of the Easter season, you may choose to sing 'Alleluia' after the completion of the Gospel reading as well as at the beginning.

**Gospel:** John 10: 11-18

### **Reflecting on the Reading with Children**

Give each child a puppet. Get the 'sheep' to huddle together at first, then to follow the 'shepherd.' The wolves draw near (making wolf noises if you feel it is appropriate). What does the Good Shepherd do? Protects the sheep, even to the point of death. Replay the scene again, this time with a 'hired hand.' When the wolves draw near, the 'hired hand' runs away and allows the sheep to be eaten.

- Who was better at looking after the sheep, the shepherd or the hired hand? (You may need to explain that a hired person was not a permanent employee and so wouldn't know or care about the sheep).
- Jesus is our Good Shepherd, always looking out for us and always with our best interests in mind. What people today might be represented by the 'hired hand' in the story? Try to draw out that there are advertisers that will try to make us think that their toy will make us happy, or that there are bullies who may try to get us to join in with them making fun of someone, but that following Jesus is the only real thing is good for us.
- What does it mean to follow Jesus, our Good Shepherd? Does it mean that we should go to Nazareth and Galilee and Jerusalem and the places that he lived in his lifetime? If not, then what DOES it mean?

### Response

As Jesus' flock, we are encouraged to follow Jesus example with our lives. This is something we strive to do every day, but as a symbol of our desire to follow Jesus' actions, explain that you all are going to follow a dressed-up version of a shepherd around the children's liturgy space. (You may choose to process in to the main body of the church by following the 'shepherd' as well.)

### 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, maker of all his beloved world?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for us, his sheep?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, helping us to follow in Jesus' footsteps in our lifetime?

### We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayer to the Gospel reading by saying, 'As the Good Shepherd, you are always looking out for our needs, and so we pray for those things that concern us...'

Leader: We pray for the pope and the bishops, that all may faithfully lead the Church in today's world. Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for the whole world, that all people will come to know of Jesus' love. Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for shepherds and farmers, that they may do a good job of looking after their flocks and herds and crops. Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We take a moment to think of anyone we know who is having difficulty doing the right thing and following Jesus. (pause) Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, we know you are guiding us everywhere we go, in everything we do. Help us to always follow your example and show concern for others. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen.**