

Fourth Sunday of Easter - Lectionary: 49

Reading 1 - [Acts 2:14a, 36-41](#)

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

Responsorial Psalm - [Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b4, 5, 6](#) - R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Reading 2 - [1 Peter 2:20b-25](#)

Beloved: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Gospel - [John 10:1-10](#)

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

The Voice of the Good Shepherd: Finding Abundant Life

Highlights Christ's intimate care and the dual role of Jesus as the Good Shepherd and the Gate to abundant life.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD & THE GATE
Jesus is the exclusive entrance to salvation, offering safety from thieves and robbers.

RECOGNIZING THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE
Like sheep in a communal fold, we must learn to distinguish Christ's voice.

SCRIPTURE AS THE "GATE"
The Bible provides access to the knowledge of God and guards against pride.

SACRAMENTAL & PRACTICAL LIVING

BAPTISM: RESTFUL WATER **CONFIRMATION: ANOINTING OIL** **EUCHARIST: OVERFLOWING CUP**

SACRAMENTAL IMAGERY IN PSALM 23

THE PATH TO REPENTANCE
Repent → Be Baptized → Receive the Holy Spirit

ENTHRONING THE SACRED HEART
Placing a Sacred Heart image in the home serves as a reminder of Christ's love.

As Peter preached in Acts.

THE TRUE GATE
(Scripture/Christ)
LEADS TO ABUNDANT LIFE
ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD
PROTECTS THE SOUL

THE "THIEVES & ROBBERS"
STEAL, SLAUGHTER, AND DESTROY
"DOOM SCROLLING" & WORLDLY NOISE
RELATIVISM & "PERSONAL TRUTHS"

NotebookLM

Summary

The liturgical observance of the Fourth Sunday of Easter, commonly known as "Good Shepherd Sunday," focuses on the transition from Christ's singular sacrifice on the cross to His ongoing pastoral care for the faithful. Central to this theme is the dual identification of Jesus Christ as both the "Good Shepherd" and "the Gate." The provided texts emphasize that salvation and "abundant life" are found exclusively through this gate, which is understood both as the person of Christ and as Sacred Scripture. In a modern context characterized by relativism and increasing "business," the faithful are called to a disciplined formation of the heart to recognize the Shepherd's voice amid a multitude of competing, predatory influences. This formation is achieved through repentance, immersion in the Word of God, and the sacramental life of the Church.

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The readings, on this 'Good Shepherd Sunday', bring together the overall theme of the easter season. They reflect a movement from Christ's singular sacrifice to His ongoing pastoral care. They help us to reflect on this image of the good shepherd in the light of God's love. The image of the good shepherd, one of the most profound images of Jesus upon which we can meditate, is one through which he calls out to us, the sheep of his flock, by name, inviting us to unite our hearts to his own sacred heart and demonstrates the depths of his care as he seeks those who have gone astray to lead them back: *"From their different locations and traditions all are called in Christ to share in the unity of the family of God's children... Jesus destroys the walls of division and creates unity in a new and unsurpassed way through our sharing in his mystery."*¹ This unity is so deep that the Church can say with Saint Paul: *'You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are saints and members of the household of God'*.²

¹ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 70.

² *Ephesians 2:19*

The poetically calming words of Psalm 23 are some of the most consoling words that help us to understand his relationship with us. Psalm 23 shifts our focus to the interior, sacramental life. In this liturgical movement, the Lord is revealed as a present Shepherd whose provision removes the basis for all fear. The imagery that the Psalmist uses evokes in us a recollection of the first sacraments we received; of our Baptism, as we are drawn to reflect on the 'restful waters' of life in Christ that restores our soul and washes away the drought of sin. Contemplation of our Baptism and the psalmist's image of being anointed with holy oil recalls receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation and being sealed with the Holy Spirit. Finally, we share the Eucharist, in the 'overflowing cup of blessing' at the table prepared amid a hostile world. Through these rites, our Shepherd facilitates an intimate communion, walking alongside the soul to provide sustenance and security amidst the "dark valley" of the world.

This comforting landscape is made possible only through the visceral reality of the "Suffering Servant" who laid down His life for the flock. The first reading speaks to us of the fundamental kerygmatic truth that must be received by each person if the words of the psalmist are to be our own felt expression and the grace to know the shepherd's consoling love is to be fully experienced. This revelation of Christ and the nature of God's love unceasingly continue to be our guiding light throughout salvation history.³ "*The truth, which is Christ, imposes itself as an all-embracing authority*".⁴ The Christian mystery, in fact, overcomes all barriers of time and space, and accomplishes the unity of the human family.⁵

Jesus calling himself the 'Good Shepherd' would have been very well understood by the Jews listening to him and very angering to the religious leaders, since using such a title amounts to a claim to be King of Israel, Son of David and therefore Messiah. Even more than that, we can see here a claim to be the Lord God, who is often called the Shepherd of Israel.⁶ To our modern ears it can also be a shocking claim. He doesn't say that he's *a gate*. Not *one possible gate*. But *the only gate*. How do those words strike you? Many people today, deeply affected by the relativistic culture in which we live, would recoil at such absolute and seemingly exclusive statement.

The prevailing thought about faith and religion, influenced by the idea that each of us has our own truth, is that all roads can lead to God. No one road is perfect. No one road is superior to another road. Although it's true that we each walk our own path and it's there that God will meet us, the path doesn't end there. If the truth I seek is relative to me, then it isn't the one true living God whom I seek. Nor will that search lead to my salvation. We cannot find God and salvation in whatever religion we prefer, all things being equal in our minds. This is not the message of Jesus Christ who is himself, Son of God-Christ the Messiah, the gate by which we enter into our salvation.

Christianity is contrary to relativism. The missionary disciple knows that God created us with an objective purpose, and that original sin separated us from that purpose, and that Christ came to reconcile us with our creator and ourselves. The missionary disciple knows that some beliefs and behaviors are damaging to human nature, just as poison is damaging to the human body. The missionary disciple know these things because Christ's message of salvation has reached their hearts and minds. We have received that message from the Church Christ established in his Apostles. And that Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, has made sure to protect Christ's message from distortion for two thousand years, and to send out missionaries who have made it known in every generation and in every corner of the globe.

³ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*., 15

⁴ *Ibid.*, 92

⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, [Dominus Iesus: Declaration on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church](#), trans. Vatican City (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000).

⁶ cf. e.g. Jerimiah 23:3; 31:10; 50:19; Ezekiel 34:11; Psalms 22/23:1; 27/28:9; 76/77:21; 77/78:52; 79/80:1

There is something more here than the consoling good shepherd. In the gospel Jesus also uses the sheepfold imagery to say something deeply theological. He says that he is the gate, the exclusive point of entry through which, "*whoever enters will be saved.*"⁷ This passage draws a sharp, binary contrast between the true Shepherd and the predatory influences that threaten the flock. Entering through the 'gate' is the prerequisite for promise of "*abundant life*" which is the ultimate fruit of this relationship, signifying that the life of the believer is not one of mere survival, but a supernatural expansion of being under the Shepherd's constant care. St. Augustine firmly believed and taught⁸ that Christ and no one else is the door into the sheepfold, that is, the multitude of the faithful: *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have access through faith into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the sons of God*⁹; *there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*¹⁰

In Thomas Aquinas' commentary on John 10, he explores St. John Chrysostom's teaching that the gate is also Sacred Scripture¹¹, since as we know, Christ the logos is the living Word.¹² Aside from Christ nothing is more fittingly called a door than Sacred Scripture. Christ calls Sacred Scripture the 'gate,' because Scripture gives access to the knowledge of God, preserves the life of the faithful, and keeps out false teaching/heretics from harming the flock. Just as Christ says: *in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men*¹³; *you have made void the word of God.*¹⁴ The mark of the thief then is one who climbs the wall, instead of entering by the door. Referring to this he says that such a person climbs, that is, through pride. The one who climbs in another way is a thief, because he snatches what is not his, and a robber, because he kills what he snatches. It also corresponds to the truth, because the reason why some teach what conflicts with Sacred Scripture is due to pride: *if any one teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching which accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit, he knows nothing.*¹⁵

Enthroning the Sacred Heart

Unless we come to know the intensity of the love Christ is showing us on the cross, we will never be able to trust Christ enough to follow him the way we need to. To get to know his love, we need to contemplate his suffering, the visible expression of that love. We need to think and pray about it and keep it in mind. Then, little by little, God's grace will enlighten our hearts and convince us, reveal to us, how deeply and unconditionally Christ loves us.

One long-standing tradition that can help us do that is called the Enthronement of the Sacred Heart.

- It consists in placing an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a prominent place in the home.
- The image of the Sacred Heart was revealed to St Margaret Mary Alacoque in the late 1600s.
- It shows Jesus blessing us and pointing to his heart, which is visible.
- It is surrounded with a crown of thorns and wounded on one side, symbolizing his passion and the suffering that every sin causes him;
- Out of the heart come bright flames, symbolizing his eternal, passionate love for us.

⁷ John 10:9

⁸ Saint Thomas Aquinas, [Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–21](#), trans. Fabian R. Larcher, vol. 2, Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Steubenville, OH; Green Bay, WI: Emmaus Academic; Aquinas Institute, 2018), 33–35.

⁹ Romans 5:1–2

¹⁰ Acts 4:12

¹¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas, [Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 1–21](#), trans. Fabian R. Larcher, vol. 2, Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Steubenville, OH; Green Bay, WI: Emmaus Academic; Aquinas Institute, 2018), 32–34

¹² John 1:1–18

¹³ Matthew 15:9

¹⁴ Matthew 15:6

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 6:3

- And on top of the heart is planted a cross, the everlasting reminder that salvation comes through suffering.
- Some families keep candles near the image, lighting them when they pray together, or when they have a special prayer intention.
- When Jesus appeared to St Margaret Mary one of the promises he made was to "bless the home in which the image of my Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honored."

This is one practical way to remember Christ's love and let it fill us with the courage and wisdom we need to follow him through our own Good Fridays and into Easter Sunday.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Abundant Life	A supernatural expansion of being under the Shepherd's care; more than mere survival, it is the ultimate fruit of a relationship with Christ.
Enthronement	The tradition of placing an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a prominent place in the home to honor his love and protection.
Gate	A title used by Jesus to describe himself as the exclusive point of entry for salvation; also interpreted by the Church as Sacred Scripture.
Good Shepherd Sunday	The Fourth Sunday of Easter, characterized by liturgical readings focusing on Christ's role as the leader, protector, and guardian of souls.
Kerygmatic Truth	The fundamental, essential message of the Gospel (the <i>kerygma</i>) regarding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that must be received by the faithful.
Logos	A Greek term meaning "Word," used to describe Christ as the living Word of God.
Missionary Disciple	One who knows Christ's message of salvation and understands that God created humanity with an objective purpose, seeking to share this truth with others.
Relativism	The cultural belief that truth is subjective to the individual and that no one religion or path to God is superior to another.
Sacred Heart	A devotional image of Jesus symbolizing his intense, unconditional love for humanity and the suffering caused to him by sin.
Sheepfold	A figure of speech for the multitude of the faithful or the Church, into which the sheep enter through the gate for safety and sustenance.
Suffering Servant	The image of Christ from 1 Peter 2:20b-25, describing him as one who bore sins in his body and left an example of patient endurance for his followers.
Thief/Robber	Anyone who attempts to influence the flock by "climbing over the wall" rather than entering through the gate; often associated with pride and false teachings.