

HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR A.



**ACTS 2:14a, 36-41, PSALM 23:1-6,
1 PETER 2:20b-25, JOHN 10:1-10.**



JESUS IS THE SHEPHERD AND GUARDIAN OF OUR SOULS.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. The fourth Sunday of Easter is also known as the Good Shepherd or Vocation Sunday. The day is celebrated especially as World Day of Prayer for Vocations, in which we are all exhorted to pray for vocations to the priesthood, consecrated life, and married life. In today's readings, we hear of the many ways Jesus reaches out to us and saves us, tending to us as a Shepherd. He is indeed, as Peter says, the Shepherd and guardian of (our) souls.

Beloved friends, the Gospel for this day is always drawn from the 10th chapter of the Gospel of St. John. Here, Jesus describes Himself as both the door and the Shepherd of the sheep. As the door, Jesus is the only way to belong to the flock of God. Elsewhere, Jesus calls Himself the way, the truth and the life, making it clear that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Those who don't follow the right way will only have themselves to blame when they realize, we hope rather not too late, that the way that they have been traveling all along leads not to the greener pastures of the Father's House, but to death and eternal damnation.



Jesus, being the door, is connected to His also being the Shepherd. The actions of the sheep express the relationship between Jesus as a Good Shepherd and His sheep in response to Him. The sheep hear His voice, know His voice, and they follow Him. The sheep that belong to Jesus hear and know the Shepherd's voice because it is a distinct voice that distinguishes Him from the voices of others. The sheep heard His voice and accepted Him because for them He spoke with the voice of authenticity. They could always see how He paid attention to the real condition of the people He encountered. His voice echoes the unconditional love of God who loves to the end, up to the point of death (John 13:1), for the salvation of the flock. The voice full of mercy and

compassion for the weak, vulnerable, and neglected sheep; A voice that calls after the strayed sheep to reunite it with the flock (Luke 15) happily.

Beloved friends, there are some voices we recognize as real because we believe that the speaker is trying to face the complexity of life with honesty and courage. There are other speakers we suspect are just prattling on, turned to making the right noises in an everlasting effort to be elected the official voice. In the end, they fleece people: they steal their hope to secure their own power. Today's Gospel reminds us again of Jesus the Good



Shepherd, who hopes that people will come to recognize His voice as the one that addresses who they are and where they are, leading them without disguise or presence. The first letter of Peter makes the same point when it speaks of Jesus: "He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in His mouth." Beloved friends, to know and hear Jesus, we must listen to Him

attentively, without any distractions or hardness of heart (Psalm 95:7-8).

To listen well to Jesus, we also need to be available and open to Him. It is difficult to communicate with someone who is not there or who has refused to connect with us. If we fail to listen to Jesus, we stand the risk of being confused by the cacophonous and conflicting voices of deceivers and manipulators who are out to prey and feast on any naive and docile sheep. Listening to Jesus has the added advantage of helping us to become aware that He knows us by name (Isaiah 43:1, John 10:14); He loves us without any merits on our part; and He is always with us in whatever conditions or situations that we may find ourselves to lead us and to offer us maximum protection against all evil that might lead us to death especially eternal death (Psalm 23). May our following Jesus indeed become for us an opportunity to imitate the Good Shepherd.

Beloved friends, let us continue to pray for genuine vocations to the clerical, religious, and married life, and for those who are no longer in their chosen vocations, that God will continue to guide them to a more perfect vocation that suits their way of life. For those who are still in their respective vocations, may He renew the grace of their vocations.



PEACE BE WITH YOU!

