

Fourth Sunday of Easter (A)
Imitate Jesus as the Door of Life, Not Death

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4,5,6; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; John 10:1-10

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you all in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture" (Jn. 10:7-9).

Jesus is the gate for the sheep, offering protection and safety. The shepherd risks his life to protect his flock, unlike a hired hand. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus is our ultimate protection: the safest place for us is by his side. The devil fears the shepherd, not the sheep.

Jesus' declaration as the gate offers assurance of safety and an invitation to enter. We must pass through him to belong. Obedience and trust mark our relationship: listen to his voice in the Bible, prayer, and the sacraments; trust him in difficulties. The cross is the gate to life with the Good Shepherd, our spiritual nourishment. Jesus said, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."

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The Acts of the Apostles show life under the Good Shepherd: believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teachings, to fellowship, to breaking bread, and to prayer. They lived in trust and generosity, freed from fear and persecution. Their way compels us to conversion, prayer, and meditation on the Good Shepherd, so we may enter and imitate his way.

What the Good Shepherd gives us can't be repaid. We can only receive it with open hearts. Though we can never match his gift, we are called to pay it forward: by emulating the shepherd's care and opening doors for others, we answer his call to shepherding. We follow Jesus as both sheep and shepherds, helping and guiding those around us. Peter urges us: "If you are patient when you suffer for doing good, this is a gift from God. For this, you have been called, because Christ suffered for you, showing you how to live" (cf. 1 Pt. 2:20-21).

I remember Priscilla, a deaf and mute parishioner who served faithfully and attended daily Mass. Each morning, she arrived early and prayed alone before the Tabernacle. One day, only Priscilla and I celebrated Mass. Though she could not hear or speak, I felt the meaning in the liturgy's gestures. She always responded at the right moments. Her role mattered: she kept the linens clean and cared for the sacristy. Living nearby, she brought cold ginger ale after cleaning and mowing. Priscilla embodied dedication, always ready to help. Her ordinary service made her a shining servant of the Good Shepherd.

Let us respond to the Good Shepherd's call by actively shepherding others with Jesus' heart—guiding, protecting, and caring for those around us. To do so, choose one person this week to whom you will intentionally offer support, encouragement, or help. Take practical steps to be a door of hope and new life for them and avoid indifference in your actions and attitudes. Embrace St. Therese of the Child Jesus's "little way": offer a smile to someone who is unkind, practice patience in daily interactions, speak kindly rather than harshly, and make small sacrifices without letting others know. Commit to these actions and inspire change.

Through such small acts, we continue to reflect the Good Shepherd's self-giving love and to transform our communities, inspiring others to follow his example.

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor