

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



The Lord Is My Shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I lack.
In green pastures he makes me lie down;
to still waters he leads me;
he restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths

for the sake of his name.
Even though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff comfort me. Amen

April 25, 2021

The Good Shepherd



Today's readings: Acts 4:8–12; Psalm 118:1, 8–9, 21–23, 26, 28, 29; 1 John 3:1–2; John 10:11–18. Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd.” The image of the Good Shepherd is one that shows a love that is protective and a love that shows complete concern for the other. This love is most fully expressed when the shepherd lays down his life on the cross for the sheep.

For Jesus’ listeners, the image of a shepherd would have been familiar. The community lived closer to the land than many do today and knew what the work of shepherding entails. In addition, alive in their memory was David, the shepherd king, the ruler of their ancestors from whom the messiah was to come. Jesus’ listeners also would have known of the bad shepherds, shepherds that the prophet Ezekiel had referenced. Jesus himself contrasts the Good

Shepherd with the hired man who works for pay. The Good Shepherd watches over the sheep with love. As Psalm 23 states, the shepherd cares for his sheep, leading them to “still waters” and guiding them “along right paths.” Both Jews and Christians draw consolation from this prayer’s depiction of God as a shepherd, with a rod and staff that provide comfort.

Copy the words of Psalm 23. Which word or phrase stands out most for you? What strikes you most fully? Use pencils, pastels, or markers to illuminate your copied psalm. Choose to draw or shade impressions or work on a less abstract illustration. While you are working, ponder the great gift of the Shepherd’s protective love. Reflect on what it means to be the Lord’s sheep.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, April 26

Listening for His Voice

The sheep hear the Good Shepherd's voice and recognize it. When do you hear the shepherd's voice most clearly? It is difficult to hear amid the noise of the world. Take five to ten minutes for silent listening. If calming your thoughts is difficult, walking may help to quiet your mind. Another tool for contemplation is to journal by drawing or writing. The movement we engage in can help to quiet our thoughts so that we can hear God calling to us. *Today's readings: Acts 11:1–18; Psalm 42:2–3, 43:3–4; John 10:1–10.*

Tuesday, April 27

Making Sheep, Being Sheep

Mold sheep out of clay or make them from cardstock, toothpicks, and cotton balls. Each family member can make his or her own sheep. Then add them to your prayer area to help you reflect on your identity as a sheep of the Good Shepherd. How does the shepherd restore your strength? How is it that you lack nothing? Reflecting on these questions together as a family is a great way to form young children in the faith. *Today's Readings: Acts 11:19–26; Psalm 87:1b–3, 4–5, 6–7; John 10:22–30.*

Wednesday, April 28

New Life

As spring comes and new life spreads throughout the world, it is as though the natural world is reminding us about resurrection. Make a small hanging planter of spring flowers, and bring it to a neighbor who is homebound or someone who is lonely. Sit and visit, seeking connection. This too is a way to bring new life. You might choose to do this for several neighbors. The planting and visiting is a great way for families to build relationships with people in their community. *Today's readings: Acts 12:24–13:5a; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6 and 8; John 12:44–50.*

Thursday, April 29

St. Catherine of Siena

St. Catherine of Siena was an Italian woman who was not afraid to speak the truth, even when it was not what people wanted to hear. Read more about the life of this woman who had mystical experiences in prayer. Is God calling you to speak the truth in difficult circumstances? In St. Catherine's day, the Church was undergoing difficulties, much like today. How can we use her life and her writings to inspire us in both prayer and action? *Today's readings: Acts 13:13–25; Psalm 89:2–3, 21–22, 25 and 27; John 13:16–20.*

Friday, April 30

Paul's Preaching

St. Paul preaches, showing Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God to Israel. When Christians read Scripture, we too look at what happened earlier in salvation history in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Does your parish have a Scripture study you can attend? Reading the Word together in community is a way to guide our interpretations. *Today's readings: Acts 13:26–33; Psalm 2:6–7, 8–9, 10–11ab; John 14:1–6.*

Saturday, May 1

St. Joseph the Worker

When we think about St. Joseph, we often meditate on what is called the hidden life of Jesus. These are the many days when the Holy Family was at home in Nazareth. In terms of the time spent and the love that existed, these days were not too different from time with our families. Mary and Joseph were observant of the customs of Jews of their day, and hospitality would have been important to them. Perhaps you could invite someone to your home for dinner in imitation of their practice. It would be especially good if you invite a person who might be having a difficult time or someone who is not a regular guest in your home. *Today's readings: Acts 13:44–52; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; John 14:7–14. Proper Gospel for Joseph: Matthew 13:54–58.*

