

Fourth Sunday of Easter

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

[Responsorial Psalm: 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6](#)

[Reading II: 1 Peter 2:20b-45](#)

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

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/043023.cfm>



Greek Icon of the Good Shepherd

The selection from the Acts of the Apostles presents the final part of the speech by Peter on Pentecost and the response of the people. Peter declares that the resurrection is a clear sign of who Jesus is. Lord (Adonai) is the word substituted for God's name in traditional Hebrew practice. The four sacred letters that God revealed to Moses were never spoken in common dialect. Instead, Adonai (Lord) was used. Christ is the English equivalent of Messiah which means anointed one. Peter proclaims that the anointed one sent by God was God.

In response to the question from the crowd, Peter tells them to repent and be baptized. This call to repent is not just changing a few ideas or some behavior. It is to turn one's life around, to turn one's thinking inside out, and to begin to live in a whole new way. Submitting to baptism was a declaration that one could not do it on one's own effort. It was placing yourself in God's hands to begin living anew.

Baptism was a common religious practice. There was baptism into Moses, of which Paul speaks. John the Baptist celebrated baptism in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish Essene community practiced a daily baptism in case the Messiah might come tomorrow. It marked a decision to leave the old and live in a new way.

For those who have been baptized and for those preparing for baptism, each of us is challenged not just to be satisfied with the usual life of our society but ever to seek God's vision for what life can be like.

The First Letter of Peter continues the reflection on what baptism means. Drawing on the fourth Suffering Servant Song ([Is 52:13-53:12](#)), Peter invites us to follow Christ more closely, even to share hardship and suffering.

"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."

In suffering, we are challenged to look to Christ and open ourselves to letting God right the wrongs that are done for this. Christ gave us an example of how to face suffering. A Christian entrusts herself or himself to God, knowing that God will bring forth justice. Christ has suffered and was raised up. God will bring us to wholeness and freedom from all the wrongs that have been done to us.

The background for the Gospel images comes from Ezekiel 34. The prophet explores the actions of the bad shepherds and how God shepherds. In the Gospel, this passage follows the story of the man born blind. His parents were fearful of the Jewish leaders. The man was thrown out because he declared that Jesus is from God. At the end of the first century, when this Gospel was being written, Christians were being expelled from the

synagogues. This placed them in danger of the Romans, who required Emperor worship as a sign of loyalty to the state. The words of Jesus are directed to those who follow him and against any structure or person who pretends to have ultimate authority.

The Gospel presents two parables that probably come from the ministry of Jesus. The first uses the sheepfold (pen). Sheep were kept in an enclosed area to protect them from wolves. Several flocks may have been in the same enclosure. The gatekeeper will let the shepherd, who has sheep enclosed, enter the pen. If someone enters another way, they are to be viewed with suspicion. Later in the chapter, Jesus identifies himself as the gate that the way to life is through him.

The second parable examines the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. The sheep hear and recognize his voice. This does not happen automatically. Over time, sheep come to recognize the voice that cares for them. With Jesus as shepherd, we must listen to his voice and, over time, recognize it in prayer, other people, the scriptures, and events in our lives.

Themes

Repentance and Conversion

Jesus as the Good Shepherd

Leadership in the Church community

The Church as God's flock

Reflection Questions:

What does repentance mean for you?

How has your life shown signs of change and new thinking as you enter more deeply into the Christian way of life?

What are sometimes that you have suffered unjustly? How have you responded?

What does the statement in the First Letter of Peter invite you to do?

"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."

What are some ways you have recognized the voice of Christ in your life?

Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may allow Christ to bring forth abundant life within us and guide us in using our gift of life for God's glory

For a listening heart: that we, who have been called by name, may hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and respond confidently to God's invitations

For all who minister in the Church: that they will faithfully help others find Christ by the witness of their lives, the truth of their words, and the integrity of their actions

For all Christians: that we who have been called to follow Christ may lift to God those who cause us to suffer and refrain from threatening, insulting, and judging them