

The Shepherd and the Gate (4th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

Acts 2:14, 36-41—Be Baptized, for the Forgiveness of Your Sins

1. Response to the Gospel: “Repent and be baptized...”
2. Baptism: “for you *and your children*”
3. Peter’s First Homily: about 3,000 people convert (That’s one good homily!)

Psalm 23—The LORD is my Shepherd

1. The LORD (Hebrew *YHWH*) is my “Shepherd”
2. He makes me lie down in “green pastures.”

1 Peter 2:20-25—The Hope of the Resurrection of Jesus

1. You were “straying like sheep” but have now “returned”
2. The Shepherd and Guardian “of your souls”

John 10:1-10—Jesus, the Good Shepherd

1. The “Figure” (Greek *paroimia*) of the Shepherd; they don’t understand!
2. Sheepfold: a stone enclosure with a single entry; for protecting sheep at night
3. Thief/Stranger: breaks in to steal the sheep
4. Shepherd: true guardian and protector of the sheep
5. Gatekeeper: will only open to the true shepherd
6. Sheep: know the “voice” of the Shepherd; he calls them “by *name*”
(e.g., “Long ears”, “White nose,” etc.)
7. Jesus provides two explanations:
8. “I am the Gate”:
 - a. Thieves and Robbers = previous leaders of Israel (cf. Ezek 34:2-6)
 - b. Gate to Eternal Life: “he will be saved” or “find pasture” (cf. Psalm 23)
 - c. “Go in and come out” = image of Joshua and promised land (Num 27:15-17)
3. “I am the Good Shepherd”:
 - a. Good Shepherd: comes that they may have “life, and have it abundantly”
 - b. Psalm 23: The LORD the Shepherd
 - c. Ezekiel 34: The Messiah is the Shepherd
 - d. Life = eternal life (cf. John 3:16)

“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, *I myself will search for my sheep*, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and *I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness...* (Ezekiel 34:11-12)

Vatican II on the Good Shepherd

The Church is a sheepfold whose one and indispensable door is Christ. It is a flock of

which God Himself foretold He would be the shepherd, and whose sheep, although ruled by human shepherds; are nevertheless continuously led and nourished by Christ Himself, the Good Shepherd and the Prince of the shepherds, who gave His life for the sheep. (*Lumen Gentium* no. 6)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (4th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1. Take some time to go back and read Ezekiel 34 and the ancient prophecy about the wicked “shepherds of Israel” and the good shepherd, God himself. What do you think Jesus’ original audience would have thought about calling himself “*the Good Shepherd*”? Is he making a divine claim here?

2. Reread Psalm 23 with Jesus’ discourse on the Good Shepherd in mind. What is Psalm 23 really about? What are the “table” set by the LORD? What are the shepherd’s “rod” and “staff”? Where is the “house of the LORD”?

3. As a member of the flock of the Church, how can you grow to know the “voice” of the Shepherd better?

For Further Study

1. Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Zondervan, 1970). A helpful little book, that connects the words of Psalm 23 with the actual experience of being a shepherd. Note: the author is Protestant, and does not write from a Catholic perspective.
2. Francis Martin and William M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 186-191. A solid short commentary on this section of John’s Gospel from a Catholic perspective.
3. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds) (1992). http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html Papal document on the formation of priest as shepherds in the imitation of Christ.