

Jesus the Good Shepherd (4th Sunday of Easter, Year B)

Acts 4:8-12—Peter’s Speech to the High Priests in Jerusalem

1. Arrested: Disciples are arrested by the Sanhedrin and put in custody (Acts 4:1-3)
2. Conversions: number of believers has grown to “about five thousand” (Acts 4:3)
3. High Priests: Peter speaks to “Annas,” “Caiaphas,” and High Priestly family (Acts 4:6)
4. Question: “By what power of by what name did you do this?” (Acts 4:7)
5. Answer: “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom *you* crucified” (4:10)
6. Prophecy: “This is *the stone* that was rejected by you builders” (cf. Psalm 118)
7. Salvation: “There is salvation (Greek *sōtēria*) in no one else...” (Acts 4:12)

Psalm 118—The Stone Rejected by the Builders

1. Stone: “which the builders rejected” → the “cornerstone” (v. 22)
2. Messiah: “blessed is he who enters/comes in the name of the Lord” (v. 26)
3. Temple: “we will bless you from *the house of the LORD*” (v. 26)

1 John 3:1-2—The Beatific Vision of God

1. Beatific Vision: “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (CCC 1023-24)

John 10:11-18—The Good Shepherd Lays Down His Life

1. Good Shepherd: “lays down his life for the sheep” (10:11)
2. Hireling: “whose own the sheep are not”; flees at the sight of “the wolf” (10:12)
3. Knowledge: two kinds of knowledge
 - a. Recognition: Sheep “know/recognize” their Shepherd (10:14)
 - b. Intimacy: Father “knows” the Son; Son “knows” the Father (10:14)
4. Other Sheep: are “not of this fold” (=Gentiles)
5. Unity of the Church: there shall be “one flock, one shepherd” (10:16)
6. Crucifixion: Jesus *freely* “lays down” his life; “no one takes it from me” (10:18)
7. Resurrection: “I have the power to take it again”; divine power (10:18)

The Catechism: All Salvation is through Christ

“*Outside the Church there is no salvation.*” How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers? Re-formulated positively, it means that *all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body*: “Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council [Vatican II] teaches that *the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.* This

affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church... (CCC 846-47)

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

1. What does it mean when Peter says “there is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12)? What does this mean for us today, in the context of so many different religions?

2. How is Jesus “the stone” rejected by “the builders”? What would it have meant in a first-century Jewish context to call Jesus the “cornerstone”? (cf. Psalm 118)

3. When Jesus says there shall be “one flock” and “one shepherd” (John 10:16), what kind of Church does he envision? (see CCC 813-822)

For Further Study

1. Peter M. J. Stravinskias. *Salvation Outside the Church?* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2002). A concise, readable overview of the Church’s teaching on the controversial question of whether there is any salvation “outside the church.”
2. Joel C. Elowsky, *John* (2 vols.; Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IV; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 1.342-54. A wonderful collection of ancient Christian interpretations of John’s Gospel and the Good Shepherd discourse.