

The Imitation of Christ (4th Sunday of Easter, Year A)

1 Peter 2:17-21—The Imitation of the Suffering Christ

²⁰ But if *when you do right and suffer for it you take it patiently*, you have God's approval. ²¹ *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* ²² He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. *By his wounds you have been healed.* ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to *the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.* (1 Peter 1:17-21)

1. Patience: (Greek *hypomenō*); when you “do right and suffer for it” (2:20)
2. Example: Christ “suffered” as a “model of behavior” (Greek *hypogrammos*) (2:21).
3. Imitation: “follow in his steps” (2:21)
3. Suffering Servant: alluding to the prophecy of Isaiah:

⁴ *Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows...*

⁵ *But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,
and with his stripes we are healed.*

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,
so he opened not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:4-7)

4. Shepherd: Jesus is both sheep and shepherd (cf. Ezek 34) (2:25)
5. Bishop: Jesus is “guardian”—lit. “bishop” (Greek *episkopos*)—of your “souls” (2:25)

The Living Tradition

Catechism: *It is love "to the end" that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction.* He knew and loved us all when he offered his life... No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and

constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all. (CCC 616)

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

1. What are the implications of Peter’s teaching that Christians should expect to “suffer” with “patience” in imitation of Christ?

2. How is Christ both “shepherd” and “bishop” (Greek *episkopos*) of our souls?

For Further Reading

1. Keating, Daniel. *First and Second Peter, Jude*. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
2. Bede the Venerable. *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1985.
3. Bray, Gerald. *James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament XI. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2000.