

# Sunday Message

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

THE WORD

Year A • 30 April 2023 • Psalter Week 4

## OUR COMMON VOCATION JOHN 10:1-10

One of the most enduring Christian images is that of the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep.

The image of God as shepherd is very strong in the Old Testament. The Lord is Israel's shepherd leading his people like a flock. When the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, the Lord led them from exile, "guiding them like a flock in the desert, leading them safe and unafraid, while the sea engulfed their enemies" (Ps 78:52-53).

The Good Shepherd is a beautiful, reassuring image of Jesus. A good shepherd is someone who knows his sheep, looks after them, protects them, and seeks out any lost. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, knows us individually, loves us, and cares for us. We are called to stay close to him, to listen to his voice, and follow him as he shows us the way to fullness of life. ■

### REFLECT

On 12 September 1979, an innocent, 17-year-old Limerick youth joined the Redemptorists. For some time during my last year in school, I had been thinking of priesthood, and then the Redemptorists came to my parish to preach a mission. Impressed with what they did, I wrote to the Redemptorist vocations director and ended up in the seminary.

Today, Good Shepherd Sunday, is Vocations Sunday, a day the Church prays for vocations. As in my case, it's impossible to say where exactly vocations come from or how the Holy Spirit works. Who can say what divine chemistry causes a spark to catch flame?

But if you think you don't have a vocation, you are wrong.

Everyone in the Church has a vocation. We may live out our vocation in specific ways – as priest or religious, as single or married, pursuing particular careers – but every one of us has a vocation rooted in our common baptism.

And no matter what direction our life takes or what specific vocation we live, some common characteristics underline our Christian vocation.

First, to be people of love. This is the most basic vocation we have as Christians. Jesus said: You must love God and your neighbour as yourself. Love was at the centre of all Jesus did. If I do not reach out every day in love to others, then all my church-going and prayers are hollow. We Christians are nothing if we are not people of love.

This is difficult, and we fall short all the time, but many people have shown me

how to live the vocation to love. Like Maximilian Kolbe, who in Auschwitz sacrificed his life for a man he did not know. Would I be able to love like that? Would you?

The second characteristic of the Christian vocation is compassion. Remember how Jesus healed the ten lepers, how he spoke to the woman at the well.

Being compassionate is difficult, and we fall short all the time, but many people have shown me how to be compassionate. I think of a religious sister who works with young women caught up in the sex industry. She is there for them, very often as their only advocate. She shows me what compassion is all about.

The third characteristic of the Christian vocation is prophecy. We must be prophetic people. Jesus witnessed to the kingdom values of justice, peace and love, no matter the risk to himself. He preached the truth even though it upset many people and led to his execution.

In today's secular society, it takes courage to witness to the Gospel. It can take courage to proclaim publicly what we believe. To say you are a Christian is to risk being sneered at or dismissed as a religious nut. This is why, now more than ever, we need to be prophetic, happy to witness to the Gospel, notwithstanding the cost to ourselves.

Many people who stand with those who are poor and witness to the Gospel with extraordinary courage and commitment show me what it means to be prophetic.

On this Vocations Sunday, think of your vocation to be more loving, compassionate, and prophetic and ask the Lord to help you. ■



### LEARN

It is through Jesus that we enter into the life of God

Jesus is our good shepherd

We all have a common vocation rooted in our baptism

### PRAY

Say this prayer for vocations:

God our Father, hear our prayer for all your children's needs. Grant that each of us may hear your gentle invitation to do your will in whatever way you wish. Help us to trust you. Give us the strength to follow the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Enable us to walk with your beloved Son Jesus Christ, so that, in all things, we may give you glory and help build up your kingdom of truth, peace and justice. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### SAY

**"Lord, you are my good shepherd. Help me to follow you always. Amen."**

### DO

Examine your life. Where do you look for happiness and meaning? Do you really believe that Jesus offers you fullness of life?



**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

**COLLECT**

Almighty ever-living God, lead us to a share in the joys of heaven, so that the humble flock may reach where the brave Shepherd has gone before. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING** Acts 2:14. 36-41

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles. On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd with a loud voice: "The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ."

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, "What must we do, brothers?" "You must repent," Peter answered "and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself." He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments, and he urged them, "Save yourselves from this perverse generation." They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM** Psalm 22

Response: **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

Or Alleluia!

- 1. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose. Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)

- 2. He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name. If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear. You are there with your crook and your staff; with these you give comfort. (R.)
- 3. You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. (R.)
- 4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever. (R.)

**SECOND READING** 1 Peter 2:20-25

A reading from the first letter of St Peter. The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing punishment patiently when you are punished after doing your duty. This, in fact, is what you are called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;  
I know my own sheep and my own know me.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** John 10:1-10

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. Jesus said: "I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers."

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them. So Jesus spoke to them again: "I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them.

I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (all bow during the next two lines) who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Grant, we pray, O Lord, that we may always find delight in these paschal mysteries, so that the renewal constantly at work within us may be the cause of our unending joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd, and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures the sheep you have redeemed by the Precious Blood of your Son. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.