

## Fourth Sunday of Easter - Lectionary: 49

### Reading 1 [ACTS 2:14A, 36-41](#)

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, "What are we to do, my brothers?" Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call." He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

**Responsorial Psalm** [23: 1-3A, 3B4, 5, 6](#) - R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

### Reading 2 [1 PT 2:20B-25](#)

Beloved: 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. 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. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

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

Jesus said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them. So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, but we also call it Good Shepherd – Vocation Sunday. I've decided not to talk directly about that at all... but to focus on where good and holy Priests come from.

The first reading today from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, is about conversion... hearing the Gospel Truth, repenting and believing. What's a believer to do at this point, well like Peter says, get baptized and receive the Holy Spirit. Now, thanks to God's gift of faith, you're a member of the mystical body of Christ and a you share in His mission, which means you're also going to need to listen to Him and do what He says or you won't be able to receive the fullness of the promises because you won't be able to stay focused on always saying yes to the universal call to holiness... We can't be like the some of the Corinthians who thought, yay, we're free... let's party and do what ever we want! YOLO

Although full conversion of heart and mind can take a while, I imagine that most of you out there are already past this particular initial step. If you're not, the rest of the homily might be interesting, but you definitely need to talk to the folks you're watching with, about that Gospel Truth. If you're a disciple of Christ and the challenge of sharing and teaching the faith to others just caused you a moment of anxiety... you'll need to work on that issue since, really, it is essential to the mission of Christ which means it's your mission too.

So, what happens next? Well, as the Psalmist says... the Lord is now your shepherd and there's nothing you shall want. But wait a minute, you say, that's not really true is it? There are plenty of Christians out there who definitely 'want' for a lot. True enough, but, tell me that you are actually living the Truth, living for righteousness... really. That you really are listening to Him and doing what He says?

That's where the second reading from the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of Peter comes into to action, and this is essential because this explains what it means to 'be a sheep who knows and follows the shepherd'. We follow him, which means we listen and do, we change, we grow, we become more and more like him... we don't just imitate Him, we actually become reformed into the image and likeness that we were meant to bear.

The call to holiness is a call to recognize Jesus as both the path and the source of holiness. When we're on it, it strikes a chord in us, and when we're not we experience discord. Makes sense, the God who made us ought to know how to remake us.

So, what does Peter tell us about following Christ, he says that obedience is non-negotiable. It's really is His way or the highway... the highway to hell! ☺ The Christian obeys Christ by obeying the commandments, the authoritative teachings of the Church, and the voice of conscience whenever it is clear and well-informed. And, something we sometimes forget, the Christian also obeys just laws and legitimate authority in society.

What does that look like? It looks like integrity. It looks like becoming a person who stands firm with Christ and avoids losing themselves to a whim of desire, or the inappropriate influence of cultural forces. A person of integrity is whole. There's nothing to hide and therefore no fear of being discovered as a fraud. As it says in Proverbs 10:9, "The one who lives with integrity lives securely". Their behavior matches their beliefs.

Wow, that could be difficult to find in the people around us... at least in perfection. But therein lies the providence of God, we've got Jesus, the model of integrity. Of course, you've got to do more than go to church once a week and listen to a Sunday sermon if you really want to get to know Jesus. "What would Jesus do?"

For instance, today the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading is 5 verses in one chapter of one letter. If you want to better understand what Peter is saying in this reading today, you're going to have to take some quality time and read the rest of that letter, where he identifies aspects of integrity. I don't want to spoil it for you, but he does talk about avoiding temptation, submitting to authority, doing what is right, and redemptive suffering. That's one that can

be hard for a lot of Christians, but truth be told, our response to suffering is one of the greatest tests of integrity. Because few experiences reveal a person's strength of faith, depth of character and commitment to Christ quicker than problems and pain. I never heard this before this week, but I like it... "Christians are like tea bags, one doesn't know what they're like inside until they are in hot water."

The passage from today's Gospel ends with Jesus telling us that He wants us to have life. To have the fullness of life. Receiving the sacraments doesn't get us that automatically, we've got to do our part. He knows we're going to be tested in some way every day and He wants us to receive from Him everything we need to choose well in those moments... to choose Him, to choose Holiness, to choose the fullness of life.

It is obvious that our Church today is in great need of good shepherds, totally committed to the Way of Jesus. The main path toward good and holy shepherds, is increasingly good and holy members of the church who grow good and holy families.