

Fourth Sunday of Easter, Cycle A, April 26, 2026

First Reading: Acts of the Apostles (2:14a,36-41) Peter and the other apostles baptize 3,000 people.

Second Reading: 1 Peter (2:20b-25) We have been healed by the wounds of Christ.

Gospel Reading: John (10:1-10) Jesus is the gate for his sheep.

The fourth Sunday of Easter is called Vocation Sunday and Good Shepherd Sunday because the gospel reading invites us to reflect on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In each liturgical cycle, the reading is from the tenth chapter of John's Gospel. This chapter sets the framework for Jesus' teaching about himself as the Good Shepherd.

Shepherding is one of the world's oldest jobs, and it still exists in many of the parts of the world. The shepherd is a person who tends, looks after, protects, or watches over a flock of sheep. Like a cowboy or a rancher, who takes care of the cattle. Both the Old and New Testaments use the image of 'a Shepherd and His flock' to describe the beautiful relationship of God with Israel and of Christ with Christians.

In today's gospel passage, Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd. This means that Jesus is the savior, the Lord, the perfect leader who has come to guide us, look after us, protect us, and watch over all of us. He died on the cross to save us from sin and death. Christ offers us access to safety, security, and peace. He gives us life that is abundantly rich and satisfying. This is called eternal life. Life in Christ is more deeply meaningful than without him because of his overflowing forgiveness, love, and guidance.

"Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.** (John: 10:7-10. NIV).

Christian leaders must be known by their faithfulness to Jesus. Jesus is the way, the gate for everyone. And having a good relationship with Jesus is the primary characteristic of a Christian leader. We need to become good shepherds and good leaders: **Everyone who is entrusted with the care of others is a shepherd.** Hence, youth leaders, coaches, pastors, parents, grandmothers, grandfathers, teachers, doctors, nurses, catechists, government officials, and caregivers, among others, are all shepherds. We become good shepherds by loving those entrusted to us, praying for them, spending our time, talents, and blessings for their welfare, and guarding them from physical, emotional, and spiritual dangers. Parents must be especially

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careful in fulfilling their duties toward their children, giving them a good example, instruction, and training in Christian principles.

Prayer for Shepherds - all who are entrusted with the care of others:

Oh God, we thank you for all those who are entrusted with the care and guidance of others in this world. Our Youth leaders, coaches, pastors, parents, grandma, grandpa, our teachers, doctors, nurses, our catechists and volunteers, government officials, caregivers, among others. Help them to be good shepherds after the heart of your Son, Jesus Christ. We pray that you fill them all with a deep faith, hope, and burning love. Be their joy, their comfort, and their strength in moments of need.

Oh, Blessed Loving Mother Mary, pray for all of us. Amen.

Fr. Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP.