



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Easter (B)

April 21, 2024

The Good Shepherd

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

For many of us, our only connection with sheep is with illustrations of the cuddly white creatures found on holy cards. However, that image strays from the facts. Sheep are not household animals. They live outdoors; they lie down in grass, dirt, and mud. Furthermore, unlike many other animals, sheep cannot clean themselves. I'm not denigrating sheep, just putting aside any fanciful view of their nature.

Raising sheep was an important occupation in the ancient world. In fact, the royalty's governance of people was often described as shepherding. David was told: "You shall shepherd my people

Israel" (2 Samuel 5:2). Later, when the royalty were not faithful to this charge, God declared: "I myself will pasture my sheep" (Ezekiel 34:15). This startling characterization of God became a characterization of Jesus.

Grime and animal smells, the blood of births and deaths, inclement weather, and the threat of predators mark the life of a committed shepherd. Human comfort was secondary to the needs of the sheep. Sheep actually learn to recognize the voice of the one who feeds them, cares for them, protects them. The shepherd's voice seems to say: *I am here for you because you are mine*. As "the Good Shepherd," Jesus is totally committed to us, his sheep. He attends to our needs, willing to risk his own security in order to save us. His care for us seems to say: *I am here for you because you are mine*. †

Sunday Readings

Acts 4:8–12

[Peter said,] "He is 'the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.'"

1 John 3:1–2

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God.

John 10:11–18

[Jesus said,] "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

God declared: "I myself will pasture my sheep."



A Word from Pope Francis

How beautiful and comforting it is to know that Jesus knows us one by one, that we are not unknown to him, that our name is known to him! We are not a "mass," a "multitude" for him, no.... He knows each of us with our own story.... Each of us can say: Jesus, knows me!

REGINA CAELI, ROME, APRIL 25, 2021



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you relate to the image of Jesus as a shepherd?
- Where do you hear the voice of Jesus who protects, knows, and loves you?

Being Love for One Another

Paula D'Arcy

I was exhausted, hungry, and out of sorts. I had just cleared customs in Atlanta after a series of flights from Europe that caused me to miss a full night's sleep. Now the flight to get me back home was delayed. I had another six hours to wait.

I went to my gate area, delighted to find it empty, hoping for a nap, when an elderly lady pushing a wheelchair approached me. She was bone weary, confused, looking for her gate and a flight to Charleston to visit her daughter. I sighed, helped the woman into the wheelchair, and started walking, looking for video monitors. The last flight to Charleston had already left. I forgot my own weariness. What on earth was she going to do?

I trudged on until we found an



information booth. There was a long line, but leaning on the edge of the booth was a young flight attendant, ready to go home, his shift over. He caught my eye and smiled. "What's wrong?" he asked. I explained. He looked at the sweet woman

in the wheelchair, almost asleep. He looked at me. Then looked right into me. "I think," he said slowly, "I think you've done your part. I think the rest is up to me. I won't leave her, I promise you. Even if she needs a room for the night, I won't leave her until she gets on a plane for Charleston." I said goodbye to the woman and turned to watch the young man wheel her down the walkway until they were out of sight.

On the surface, it was a simple encounter. But it was the way this young man had responded—looking right into my eyes. In that look, we were no longer three strangers. We were three human beings whose paths had momentarily crossed. He took it seriously: We are here for one another. And in that moment of love, he showed me the way to our true home. †

From *Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter* by Paula D'Arcy, available at Liguori.org

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Easter Springs to Life" by Diane M. Houdek

The psalm most often read at funeral liturgies is Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." We know we need God. When Jesus says he is our shepherd, we sense his intimate care for us, his flock. We recognize his voice, knowing he will lead us to abundant pastures and lifegiving water. And we know he laid down his life to keep us safe from danger and the finality of death. We can let go of many of the stresses, large and small, of daily life. We can trust that with his guidance, we will discover where we can go safely—and where we can't. By following the voice of our shepherd, we learn the true meaning of Easter. †

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Lord Jesus, amid many voices demanding our attention, help us recognize your voice, trust your love for us, and follow you, we pray. Alleluia! Amen!

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

April 22–27

Monday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 11:1–18 / Jn 10:1–10

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 11:19–26 / Jn 10:22–30

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 12:24–13:5a / Jn 12:44–50

Thursday, St. Mark:

1 Pt 5:5b–14 / Mk 16:15–20

Friday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:26–33 / Jn 14:1–6

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 13:44–52 / Jn 14:7–14

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