

# CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Easter

✧ *Good Shepherd Sunday* ✧

*This is a celebration of the Word to aid your worship this Sunday alone or with your household. If possible, place a simple cross or crucifix prominently in the room and light one or more candles. You can also place an image of the Virgin Mary there. If there is more than one person present, choose someone to lead the prayer and one or two people to do the readings.*

*Whoever leads the prayer can say:*

In today's first reading, Peter stands up with the Eleven and preaches about Jesus, our "Lord and Christ". When the people hear that it is by Christ's wounds that they have been healed, they themselves are "cut to the heart". They beg, "What must we do, brothers?" They have found in the witness of the Apostles an authority they are eager to follow. This is what Jesus means in the Gospel when he says that the Good Shepherd walks ahead of his sheep and that the sheep follow him "because they know his voice". Good Shepherd Sunday celebrates the correspondence between the longing of the human heart and "the promise that was made" by God: that he would send a Shepherd so we "may have life and have it to the full".

## **SIGN OF THE CROSS**

*After a moment of silence, let everyone begin by making the Sign of the Cross:*

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **HYMN**

*Choose an appropriate hymn.*

*We place ourselves before the Lord, beginning with an act of contrition, such as:*

O my God,

I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee,  
and I detest all my sins because of thy just punishments,  
but most of all because they offend Thee, my God,  
who art all good and deserving of all my love.

I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more  
and to avoid the near occasion of sin.

Amen.

*The following are the readings of the Fourth Sunday of Easter.*

**A reading from  
the Acts of the Apostles**

**2:14a, 36-41**

**O**N THE DAY of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd in 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 your 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.*

**R** Thanks be to God.

—•PSALM 22•—

**R** (1) The Lord is my shepherd: there is nothing I shall want.

**Or:** Alleluia!

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**

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 me comfort. **R**

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**

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**

**A reading from  
the first Letter of Saint Peter**

2:20b-25

**T**HE 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 were 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.*

**R** Thanks be to God.

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

**A reading from  
the holy Gospel according to John**

**10:1-10**

**J**ESUS 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.*

*Allow for a few minutes of silent reflection. The following passage could be read:*

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M E D I T A T I O N O F T H E D A Y

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*The Voice of the Good Shepherd*

Christ is the Good Shepherd; he calls his sheep by name and leads them forth. We, his flock, know his voice and we share his concern to gather his people together, to lead them on the way of salvation.... Let yourselves be summoned by the love of Christ; recognise his voice which rings in the temple of your heart. Receive his luminous and penetrating glance which opens the paths of your life upon the horizons of the mission of the Church, today more than ever committed to teaching man his true being, his end, his destiny, and to revealing to faithful souls the unspeakable riches of the love of Christ. Have no fear of the fact that the response he requires is radical, because Jesus, who has first loved you, is ready to give what he asks of you. If he asks much it is because he knows that you can give much. Young people, give the Church a hand in the task of saving the world of youth. React against the culture of death by means of the culture of life....

Lord, Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of our souls, you who know your sheep and know how to reach man's heart, open the minds and hearts of those...who search for and await a word of truth for their lives; let them understand that only in the mystery of

your Incarnation do they find full light; arouse the courage of those who know where to seek the truth, but fear that what you ask will be too demanding; stir the heart of those who would follow you, but who cannot overcome doubts and fears, and who in the end follow other voices and other paths which lead nowhere. You who are the Word of the Father, the Word which creates and saves, the Word which enlightens and sustains hearts, conquer with your Spirit the resistance and delays of indecisive hearts; arouse in those whom you call the courage of love's answer: "Here I am, send me!" (Is 6:8).

Virgin Mary, young daughter of Israel, support with your motherly love those whom the Father will grant that they hear his voice.... Let them repeat with you the yes of a joyful and irrevocable gift of self. Amen.

*SAINT JOHN PAUL II*

*Saint John Paul II († 2005) was pope from 1978 until 2005. This excerpt is from the Message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 8 September 1992.*

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## **INTERCESSIONS**

*In a group, the leader can begin with these words:*

We entrust ourselves to God the Father who judges justly and holds us firmly in his hand. With hearts filled with confidence, we now pray:

For the bishops, the shepherds of the Church: that they will be filled with zeal and have the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Lord, in your mercy,

*R* Hear our prayer.

That those who govern will work single-mindedly to keep their citizens safe from the coronavirus, particularly key workers, medical staff, and those who are most vulnerable. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For those who have gone astray like sheep: that they will hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, the guardian of their souls. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For children preparing to receive First Holy Communion: that the gift of the Holy Eucharist will draw them into an unending friendship with the Lord. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, especially from our own parish community. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

For the grace this week to hear and follow the voice of Jesus in all we do. Lord, in your mercy, *R*

**Personal intentions**

Our Father....

*In a group, the leader could offer some words of consolation at this moment, such as:*

Lord Jesus, we offer ourselves to you, with all our worries and concerns. Make us the living stones of the Church in this difficult time, and when we are free once more to gather in our churches, may we be strengthened in faith, hope, and charity.

***An Act of Spiritual Communion:***

My Jesus,  
I believe that you are present in this Holy Sacrament of the altar.  
I love you above all things  
and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
come spiritually into my soul  
so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and for ever.  
Amen.

*May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and lead us to everlasting life. And may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.*

***To conclude the celebration, you can sing or recite the following or another suitable hymn.  
Turn and face an image of Mary, if you have one.***



***Regina caeli, lætare, alleluia,  
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,  
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia;  
ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.***

**Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia!  
for he whom you were worthy to bear, alleluia!  
has Risen as he said, alleluia!  
Pray for us to God, alleluia!**

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## A Prayer to the Good Shepherd

*This week, inspired by the Gospel, let us entrust ourselves to Christ, the Good Shepherd.*

*The following prayer, composed by the Catholic Relief Services, might be suited for moments when we are particularly struggling, or at the close of each day.*

Lord of the 22nd Psalm,  
I have known death,  
and you have refreshed my soul.  
I have known fear,  
and you have comforted me.  
I have known hunger,  
and you have set a feast before me.  
In the darkest valley  
no calamity of humankind or nature has separated us.

Teach me to walk as you walk  
Beside those in mourning  
so that they will know joy,  
Beside those in fear  
that they will know comfort,  
Beside those in hunger  
that they will feast until their cup overflows.

As your goodness and love follow me,  
May mine follow my neighbour  
That the threat of the worst terrors  
May turn to the knowledge of the comforts of  
the house of the Lord,  
Where you have invited us to dwell forever.

And so let me strive to help build on earth  
What you have promised us in heaven.  
In the face of all calamity, present and yet to come,  
Let me lead my neighbour beside quiet waters,  
The quiet waters of the Good Shepherd.

Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

