

# Sunday, April 26, 2015

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 4:8-12

Responsorial: Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 29

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

Gospel: John 10:11-18

### Following Jesus, the Good Shepherd Who Gives His Life for Us

This is the fourth of seven “I am” declarations that Jesus makes about himself in the Gospel of John. In other ones, Jesus says that he is the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection and the life, the gate, the true vine, the way, and the door. Each of these declarations tells us something unique about Jesus and who he is as the Son of God.

Using the simple analogy of sheep and their shepherd, Jesus is telling us something central to our life of faith. Like a shepherd, he leads us, feeds us, protects us, and saves us from death. But there’s one mystery that this statement—or any of the others—doesn’t answer: why does God have such unending and boundless love for us?

The answer to this question is both simple and profound. God is love. It’s who he is. He can’t stop loving us. We are his children, and he will always care for us. He loves us so much, in fact, that he asked his Son to leave his heavenly home, take on a human body, and lay down his life for us.

Now risen in glory and enthroned with his Father, Jesus still cares more about us than he cares about himself. Like a good shepherd, he guides us to safety, restores our strength, and anoints us with his grace (Psalm 23). He is the “shepherd and guardian” of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). He is the “great shepherd” who gives his all to his sheep (Hebrews 13:20).

Jesus knows that his sheep are defenseless against the temptations of Satan, the “thief” who wants to steal, kill, and destroy us (John 10:10). He wants us to know it as well, so that we will cling to him and follow him like faithful, innocent sheep. Aren’t you glad that God is so faithful toward you? Today in prayer, tell the Lord how grateful you are. Tell him that you want to follow him wherever he leads.

*“Jesus, you are my good shepherd. Come, Lord, and keep me safe.”*

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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***Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion***

1. In the first reading, Peter tells “the people and the elders” that it is in “the name of Jesus Christ” that “this man stands before you healed.” Why do you believe there is power in the name of Jesus, especially when we pray, and do you believe this power is available to us today? Have there been any times when you prayed for someone or something in the name of Jesus, and God answered your prayers?
2. In the first reading, Peter also says that there is no “other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.” What do these words mean to you?
3. In the Responsorial Psalm, our response is “The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.” As Christians, each of us is called to make Jesus Christ the cornerstone of our life, even when we are immersed in the busyness of our day? What steps can you take to make this call a greater reality?
4. The second reading exalts in the love the Father has bestowed on us (“lavished on us” in another translation). So much so that we can now be called “children of God.” How much time do you spend talking to God, your Father, in prayer during the week? Knowing that you are his beloved child, are there some steps you can take to spend more time in prayer with him?
5. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals himself as the Good Shepherd, who knows each one of us, and who gives his life for us. What experiences in your life can you say have been examples of how Christ was the “Good Shepherd” for you in a difficult time?
6. Jesus also goes on to say that not only does he “know mine” but “mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.” What do these words mean to you and how can you make them a greater reality in your Christian walk?
7. In the meditation, these questions are posed to us: “Why does God have such unending and boundless love for us?” and “Aren’t you glad that God is so faithful toward you? How would you answer these questions, and how can your answers have a greater impact on how you live your life each day?”
8. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for being the good and faithful shepherd who lays down his life for us, and watches over us and keeps us safe. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as the starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org>); a ministry of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org>). He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org) or [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]