

# Sunday, April 22, 2018

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

### Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

#### Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 4:8-12

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

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

Gospel: John 10:11-18

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

*A good deed done . . . (Acts 4:9)*

Peter had just healed a beggar. The people who witnessed the miracle were amazed, but the rulers were offended because Peter had said that it was Jesus who healed the man—the same Jesus whom they had crucified. No wonder they arrested him!

Jesus wants us to do good deeds each day. He wants us to go out and help people who are in need. As Pope Francis said, “What matters for Jesus is, above all, reaching out to save those far off, healing the wounds of the sick and restoring everyone to God’s family” (Homily, February 15, 2015).

As our Holy Father often reminds us, there is an intimate relationship between our being filled with God’s love and our desire to do good deeds for people. The more we are filled with God’s love, the more we will want to give back to him—with gifts of praise and gifts of deeds.

Unlike Peter, it’s doubtful that we will be arrested and put in jail for doing good deeds in the name of Jesus. But like Peter, our good deeds will have the same effect on people today that they had on the people back then. They will melt people’s hearts. They will help them believe that God’s love is real and is powerful. They may spark some opposition, but not even that will diminish the power of your witness.

So pray each day and ask Jesus to fill you with his love. His love is the catalyst that can move you to love and serve those around you. Then be as generous as you can. Be on the lookout for opportunities.

Jesus wants us to do good deeds. We may not have Peter’s courage, but we all know how to do random acts of love and kindness. So start today. Make it a point to be cordial, helpful, generous, and compassionate today. Your acts of love are infectious. Who knows? They may even draw some people closer to God!

*“Lord, fill me with your love. Inspire me to do good deeds for others.”*

(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. The first reading opens with these words: “Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said: ‘Leaders of the people and elders: If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a cripple, namely, by what means he was saved, then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead; in his name this man stands before you healed.’” The reading ends with these words: “There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”
  - Why do you believe there is power in the name of Jesus, especially when we pray? 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?
  - What do the ending words of the reading mean to you?
2. The responsorial psalm ends with these words: “I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me and have been my savior. The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes.”
  - In what ways are each of us, as Christians, called to make Jesus Christ “the cornerstone” of our lives, even when we are immersed in the busyness of our days?
  - What steps can you take to make this call a greater reality in your life?
3. The second reading opens with these words: “Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are.”
  - The second reading exalts in the love the Father has bestowed on us (“lavished on us” in another translation). Knowing that you are his beloved child, how much time do you spend talking to God, your Father, in prayer during the week?
  - Are there some steps you can take to spend more time in prayer with your Heavenly Father?
4. In the Gospel reading, Jesus speaks these words: “I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep.”
  - What experiences in your life can you say have been examples of how Christ was the “Good Shepherd” for you in a difficult time?
  - What do you think Jesus means when he says, “I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father”? How can you make these words a greater reality in your Christian walk?
5. In the meditation, we hear these words: “As our Holy Father often reminds us, there is an intimate relationship between our being filled with God’s love and our desire to do good deeds for people. The more we are filled with God’s love, the more we will want to give back to him—with gifts of praise and gifts of deeds.” The meditation also includes these words: “So pray each day and ask Jesus to fill you with his love. His love is the catalyst that can move you to love and serve those around you. Then be as generous as you can. Be on the lookout for opportunities.”
  - In what ways can being “filled with God’s love” provide the “catalyst that can move you to love and serve those around you”?
  - How important to you is it to “pray each day and ask Jesus to fill you with his love”?
6. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to fill you with his love so that it will inspire you to give it to others through good deeds and works of mercy. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

***“Lord, fill me with your love. Inspire me to do good deeds for others.”***

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the **ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization** ([www.christlife.org/](http://www.christlife.org/)) and a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** ([www.nsc-chariscenter.org](http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org)). Maurice was also the founding executive director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, a former chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* ([www.wau.org](http://www.wau.org)), and director of partner relations for The Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at [mblumberg@wau.org](mailto:mblumberg@wau.org) or [mblumberg@aol.com](mailto:mblumberg@aol.com).]