

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

YEAR C

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Loving Lord,
you have put us
in the care of Jesus
who watches over us.
With your help,
may we stay faithful to him
as he gives himself to us,
and now lives with you
and the Holy Spirit,
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The focus of the readings is the spread of the Gospel to the Gentile world. In the first reading, Luke presents the preaching of the apostles with the usual results: some converts, some violent opposition, and the apostles turning to the Gentiles.

The Gospel is our assurance that when we belong to Christ, we will live forever. Nothing can take us from the loving protection of our Shepherd (as we witnessed with the apostles in the first reading). This little section of John is a return to his theme of the Good Shepherd a few verses earlier. In the previous section (reading for this Sunday in Cycle B), Jesus says, "I have other sheep who aren't in this flock yet. I must lead them too, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be only one flock with one shepherd."

FIRST READING: Acts 13:14-16, 43-52

This is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles.
Paul and Barnabas went together to Antioch. And on the Sabbath day they went to the synagogue to listen to the readings from the law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. Then the leaders of the synagogue said to Paul and Barnabas,

"Brothers, if you have something to say to the people gathered here, you may speak now."

So Paul stood up and spoke to the people. Many of the Jews believed what Paul and Barnabas taught and became followers.

The two apostles told them to keep trusting in God.

The next Sabbath day, almost everyone in the city came to the synagogue. When the Jews saw how many people came to hear Paul preach, they were jealous.

They told the people that Paul was wrong and not to listen to him.

But Paul and Barnabas went on speaking boldly:

"God sent us to preach to you first of all. But you have refused to listen to God. So now we are going to preach to the people of other nations. For God has told us,

'I have made you a light to the nations. I am sending you to tell people all over the world about salvation.'"

When the Gentiles heard about this, they were filled with joy, and they gave praise to God. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

This is the Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: Psalm 100

RESPONSE:

(Leader) We sing to you— (All) We sing to you, with songs of joy— with songs of joy.— We bless your Ho - ly name! We come to you— We come to you with thank - ful hearts with thank - ful hearts.— We en - ter your house with praise!

VERSE:

1. You are God, you made us. We are your sheep— we be - long to you.
2. You are al - ways faith - ful. Your love will last— till the end of time.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

"I am the Good Shep - herd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me." Al - le - lu - ia!"

GOSPEL: John 10:27-30

This is a reading from the Gospel of John.

Jesus said,

"My sheep listen to my voice. I know my sheep and they follow me. My sheep will live forever because I give them eternal life. No one can take them out of my hand for the Father, who is greater than anyone, gave them to me. And the Father and I are one."

This is the Good News of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Before the Gospel, ask the children what they know about sheep and shepherds. Have they ever seen sheep with a shepherd? For many children, especially those living in cities or suburbs, the image of sheep and shepherd will not be a familiar one. It is a powerful and frequently used image in both the Old and New Testaments. It will be well worth the time to familiarize the children with both the shepherding of Jesus' time and of today. Perhaps you will find pictures or even a short film on shepherding today.

The image rests on the reality of the intimacy that exists between sheep and their shepherd, for it is this intimacy and care that Jesus speaks of here.

After the Gospel, ask the children how they feel when Jesus says this. Children have experience with "protection." Allow them time to share experiences of being protected by parents, perhaps scout leaders, etc. Help them see that Jesus promises that protection forever to all his sheep, those who follow him.

Ask the children how we listen to Jesus' voice today. What are the signs that we are following Jesus?