

4 Easter Year A Summary by Dale J. Sieverding: The fourth evangelist, John, offers a discourse from Jesus about being shepherd and sheep gate. The voice of Jesus assures the late first century Christian community of the importance of listening to his voice and resting in his safety. Jesus promises to keep the flock (the Christian community) safe from thieves and robbers. For the community today, it is important that our music and liturgy focus on the voice of the shepherd and not get too impressed with having our own voices, gifts and talents get in the way.

The selection from the Acts of the Apostles exhorts people of faith who have heard the message to be "baptized...for the forgiveness of your sins" and "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The words of Peter have been prescient for many generations, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." The more things change, the more they stay the same. In all times and generations, the culture has been a challenge to living a life of faith in Jesus Christ and being witnesses to the world of God's power over sin and death.

The words from the First Letter of Peter offer us a glimpse of how we are to embrace suffering to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Whereas our culture embraces vengeance and revenge, the redemptive suffering and sacrifice of Jesus our what we are to embrace. Like the non-violence of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, we are exhorted to "return no insult", not to threaten but to hand ourselves over willingly for the sake of our faith. Doing so, we will be saved by the shepherd who knows his sheep.

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First Reading Acts 2:14a, 36-41

God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven,
raised his voice, and proclaimed:
"Let the whole house of Israel know for certain
that God has made both Lord and Christ,
this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart,
and they asked Peter and the other Apostles,

"What are we to do, my brothers?"
Peter said to them,
"Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
For the promise is made to you and to your children
and to all those far off,
whomever the Lord our God will call."
He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them,
"Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."
Those who accepted his message were baptized,
and about three thousand persons were added that day.

The word of the Lord

Commentary: Acts 2:14a, 36-41 by Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB:

This passage describes the amazing response of the hearers to the first speech among several that Peter addresses to the crowds (Acts 2:1). We are given the conclusion of the speech which actually serves as a summary of all that Peter has said. Two essential points are made. First, Jesus is Lord which means that the risen Lord shares equal status with God. Second, Jesus is the Messiah, God's anointed one who is the promised agent of salvation (Acts 2:36). These essential insights have been made clear through a faith understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection. This implies that faith more than knowledge is required to grasp Peter's message.

The remarkable aspect of the crowd's response is that it is indeed made in faith (Act 2:37). They have the requisite faith but they are unclear about the action that should flow from it. Thus the question. "...what should we do?" Peter has an immediate response (Act 2:38). First they should repent. This is not the same thing as doing penance. To repent means to change radically. If you are going north, change and go south. If you are going east, change and go west. Second, everyone is to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Baptism gives one entrance into the faith community and access to the real presence and power of the risen Lord.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is for Jews and Gentiles, those who are near as well as those who are far away (Act 2: 39). In other words, salvation is to include all who have faith in the risen Lord. It extends to all generations including our own.

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

✠(1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Or:

✠Alleluia.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

You spread the table before me

in the sight of my foes;

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me

all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

for years to come.

Commentary Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6 by Deacon Owen

Cummings: This has to be the most popular, best known and best loved psalm in the Psalter. It is especially meaningful during Lent. As we are making our way towards the Easter Vigil, the psalm recapitulates the present reality and the hope of the elect. In terms of the present, the Lord is indeed the Shepherd of the elect, close to them, guiding them through these last weeks of preparation for initiation. Lent can be a difficult time for the elect, as they prepare to enter the Church. Sometimes this leads to difficulties with families, perhaps even periods of concern and even of doubt. That is why we have the Scrutinies, the prayer that every impediment, every demonic difficulty, may be removed from the path of the elect. The psalm provides exquisite reassurance: "Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that

give me courage." God is there, side by side with the elect, and indeed with all of us, never absent. At the Easter Vigil, God's comforting presence reaches its climax as he invites and incorporates into his own life. He leads the elect to the restful waters of baptism in which they will be refreshed and renewed. They will be anointed with oil, with chrism, deepening the image of the Christ-Son in the newly baptized. The table of the Eucharist will be spread before them so that their incorporation will be complete. Fed with Christ's body the elect join us as Christ's Body, as we all struggle to give witness as Christ's Body.

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Second Reading 1 Peter 2:20b-25

You have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter

Beloved:

If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good,
this is a grace before God.

For to this you have been called,
because Christ also suffered for you,
leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.
He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult;
when he suffered, he did not threaten;
instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly.
He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross,
so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness.
By his wounds you have been healed.
For you had gone astray like sheep,
but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your
souls.

The word of the Lord

Commentary: 1 Peter 2:20b-25 by Fr. Damien Dougherty, O.F.M.: The figure of Christ is being presented in a direct relationship with Isaiah's Servant of Yahweh to affirm the salvific rapport between the suffering of Christ and that of the Christian and it mounts up gradually to a crescendo of explication: first, the absolute innocence of

Christ is highlighted, his non-opposition to the violence, injustice and his self-abandonment to God who, alone, "judges justly."

The innocent suffering of Christ, therefore, acquires a transcendental perspective: he is subjected by means of men to a judgment by God manifested and realized within Christ's death on the cross. Such a death, an annihilation of the bodily life of Christ, constitutes an annihilation of our sins - insofar as they are taken up by Christ and carried within his body on the cross.

This is a second attempt of theological intelligence to explain the connection between crucifixion-salvation, following Paul's endeavor (Romans 8, 2-4). The effect of the Christ's salvific action rests precisely in the fact that Christian life is realized in the concrete by making present within our lives that "measure" of behavior that has been established for us by God. After this exposition, what is once again expressed, with emotional force, is a concrete synthesis of the fundamental, soteriological fact: we are rendered whole by his suffering. First there is the straying herd of sheep, without a shepherd; now there is a shepherd, Christ, who looks after his herd lovingly; as he takes constant care of the present, is also preparing for the future salvation.

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Gospel Acclamation John 10:14

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my sheep, and mine know me.

Gospel John 10:1-10

I am the gate for the sheep.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said:

"Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate
but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.

But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.
The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice,
as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
When he has driven out all his own,
he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,
because they recognize his voice.
But they will not follow a stranger;
they will run away from him,
because they do not recognize the voice of strangers."
Although Jesus used this figure of speech,
the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;
I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

The Gospel of the Lord

Lectionary for Mass in the Dioceses of the United States of America, volume I Copyright © 1970, 1997, 1998 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Commentary John 10:1-10 by John Paul Heil: Main Theme: Jesus is both the "gate" and "shepherd" who leads us to eternal life. In the biblical tradition the people of God are often portrayed as "sheep" who are to be safely led by their "shepherds"--their kings and leaders--to the life God wants them to live. Although they do not realize it, the Pharisees are being portrayed by Jesus as false "shepherds" or leaders of their people. Because they do not "enter a sheepfold through the gate" as a true shepherd does, they are not shepherds but "thieves and robbers" who have come "only to steal and slaughter and destroy" the sheep. In other words, they have come to deprive the "sheep" of life rather than lead them to life with God. Jesus, on the other hand, is the true shepherd who not only enters through the gate so that the "sheep" hear his voice and follow him, but, as he solemnly reveals, "I am the gate for the sheep." As the "gate," Jesus is the means or medium through which we as "sheep"

will be saved from the death to be perpetrated by the "thieves and robbers," so that we can freely and safely "come in and go out and find pasture" in our life with God. As both the "gate" and the "shepherd" who was raised from the dead by God after he laid down his life for the sheep, Jesus came so that we might have life--an eternal life that we can live even now--and "have it more abundantly."

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