

SAFETY IN NUMBERS?

(JOHN 10:1-10)

During these Sundays of Easter, the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, describes the life and mission of the early Christian community. The extracts from the Gospel of John concentrate on the relationship of the individual disciple to Jesus.

In the image of the sheepfold, we can imagine more than one flock of sheep together. The animals do not have distinct markings, but this does not matter, as the way in which the particular shepherd gathers his own is to call them by name: the individual sheep recognises the voice of its own shepherd and comes obediently to him. The shepherd then walks off and the sheep follow trustfully: no need for dogs or whistles.

Jesus also describes himself as the gate of the sheepfold. Sometimes there was no gate or door to keep the sheep safe, so the shepherd would lie down across the opening and his body would then become the barrier to protect the flock from predators. But Jesus is more than that. He is offering ultimate safety, which we call salvation, pasture which the prophets declared the messianic shepherd would provide, and finally abundant life. Jesus is also making a contrast between himself and the leaders of the people who have failed in their responsibilities to care properly for those entrusted to them. ■

REFLECT

This passage is leading up to Jesus' describing himself as the Good Shepherd, the model for all those who are given a position of authority in the community. He will act out dramatically what this entails when he washes the feet of his disciples to teach them that authority manifests itself in humble service. The ultimate expression of this dedication to others is to lay down one's life for them: we can see this most clearly in the likes of Archbishop Oscar Romero who followed the example of Jesus in caring for his people to the extent of literally giving his life for them.

We might think today about our relationship with the risen Jesus. We consider in this Easter season that he entered into glory by way of the cross, so the gratitude which we feel is an important part of our attitude towards Jesus. It is, in some ways, easier and less demanding to think of ourselves as one of the flock, one of the crowd, and that Jesus gave his life for a vast and anonymous group. But John the evangelist does not let us off so lightly. In the Gospel today, Jesus is presented as calling his own sheep out of the amalgamated flocks one by one. He knows and can recognise each member of his own flock. Each one must respond: each one must follow. To cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus rather than simply be a member of the congregation is a challenge which some of us might rather not face: but the proper relationship of the disciple with Jesus, according to the Fourth Gospel is love; no one else can do that for us. ■

LEARN

A sheepfold would be formed of a circular stone wall with an opening: it would have thorny branches on the top to deter predatory animals.

Shepherds in the area would bring their flocks to a common sheepfold for safety at night and put them in together.

Smaller, more remote sheepfolds would have no gate or attendant: the shepherd would lie down across the opening to keep the sheep in and predators out.

DO

Look at the congregation at Mass: do you find it easier to imagine yourself as just one of the crowd or as a guest invited personally to a celebration? Remember that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows your name.



SAY

**The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall
want (Psalm 22:1)**

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth;
by the word of the Lord the heavens were
made, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,
so that the humble flock may reach
where the brave Shepherd has gone before.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Ac 2:14,36-41

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd with 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 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.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 22

Response:

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
or
Alleluia!

1. 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.)

2. 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 comfort. (R.)

3. 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.)

4. 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.)

SECOND READING

1 Pt 2:20-25

A reading from the first letter of St Peter.

The 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 are 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.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

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

GOSPEL

Jn 10:1-10

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
John.

Jesus 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.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,

begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant, we pray, O Lord,
that we may always find delight in these
paschal mysteries,
so that the renewal constantly at work within
us
may be the cause of our unending joy.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Good Shepherd has risen,
who laid down his life for his sheep
and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd,
and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures
the sheep you have redeemed
by the Precious Blood of your Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

4th Sunday of Easter

Processional Hymn

1 Baptised in water, Sealed by the Spirit,
Cleansed by the blood of Jesus our King;
Heirs of salvation, Trusting his promise,
Faithfully now God's praise we sing.

2 Baptised in water, Sealed by the spirit,
Dead in the tomb with Christ our king;
One with his rising, Freed and
forgiven,
Thankfully now God's praise we sing.

Gloria



Psalm



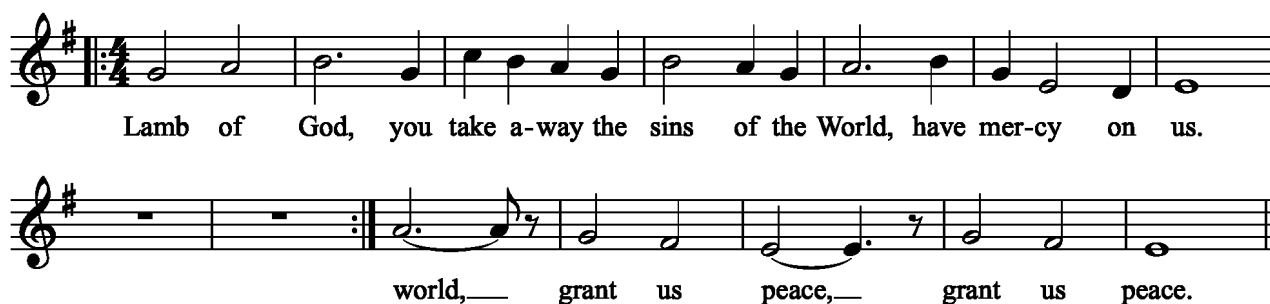
1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn and sad;
I found in him a resting place,
and he has made me glad.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul
revived,
and now I live in him.

Holy Holy

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts
heav'n and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest!

Lamb of God



Prayer of Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least
spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and
unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.

1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.
There's a kindness in God's justice,
which is more than liberty.
There plentiful redemption in the blood
that has been shed;
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the heard.

For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind.
And the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
If our love were but more faithful,
we should rest upon God's Word,
and our lives would be thanksgiving
for the goodness of our Lord.