

- *“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”*
- What a wonderful Gospel passage today as we celebrate the reception of First Holy Communion for our young ones.
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- Congratulations to all of you receiving your 1<sup>st</sup> Communion today...and welcome to all of you who have come to celebrate this day with them.
- This is one of the greatest days of your life—the day that you first receive Jesus Himself in this wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist.
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- You are a bit young to realize the greatness of this day...and, really, none of us can truly comprehend the greatness of the Eucharist and of our communion with Him when we receive this wonderful sacrament.
- The Church teaches us that in the Eucharist is the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Jesus Himself...” (cf. CCC 1324) ...
- ...and that the Mass is the sacrifice Christ offered once for all on the cross ever present...for which we give thanks with all our hearts. The word “Eucharist” itself means “thanksgiving”.
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- Because, when a priest consecrates it, that little wafer is no longer bread...the liquid in the cup is no longer wine...but they are really the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Himself...what we call the Real Presence of Christ.
- *“But it still looks like, smells like, tastes like, bread and wine!”*
- Yes, but Jesus assures us: *“This IS my body; this IS my blood.”*
- So we know it IS His Body and Blood because Jesus—God!—tells us it is! and has made it so...He who in His absolute holiness and goodness cannot lie or deceive.

- Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit created the universe—and He comes to be in that little wafer...just for you...to be with YOU. He loves you that much.
- That why it's so important to always do good and to follow what Jesus teaches us. When we sin, we push God out the back door... and opening the front door for the evil and the devil.
- If a hungry ol' bear came around your house, would you open the door and let him in? Noooo...because you know that he would wreck your house...and then he would come after YOU!
- But that is what the devil does when we let him into our soul and we do what is wrong: he wrecks our house more and more the longer we let him stay. And when we go to confession, Jesus drags him out of our house and slams the door!
- So...don't open the door! Do what is right and good, and run from evil...because God loves you so very dearly. He always wants only the best for you, and He knows what is best for us. He made us, after all, and that's why He gives us the Church: to teach us.
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- *(excerpts from the children's letters)*
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- Parents: common theme in almost all the letters is how much they want to follow you and for you to be proud of them.
- So set the example—seeking always the good yourselves... attending Mass on Sundays, avoiding evil.
- Attending Sunday Mass is our obligation as Catholics, yes...but it is much more our privilege...receiving Christ Himself.
- And as goes the parent, so goes the child.

***First Holy Communion 2016***

(Year C—4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter)

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- St. John tells us: “*God IS love*”...so we are never closer to God than when we love Him, and when we love everyone around us... being kind and generous and thoughtful.
- And so...rest in His love on this your 1<sup>st</sup> Communion day...and stay with Him always...and He bless you all today and every day...and keep you ever close to His heart.

**Fourth Sunday of Easter**

**Lectionary: 51**

**Reading 1 ACTS 13:14, 43-52**

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Paul and Barnabas continued on from Perga  
and reached Antioch in Pisidia.

On the sabbath they entered the synagogue and took their seats.  
Many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism  
followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them  
and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered  
to hear the word of the Lord.

When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy  
and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.

Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said,  
“It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first,  
but since you reject it  
and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life,  
we now turn to the Gentiles.

For so the Lord has commanded us,

*I have made you a light to the Gentiles,  
that you may be an instrument of salvation  
to the ends of the earth.”*

*The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this  
and glorified the word of the Lord.*

All who were destined for eternal life came to believe,  
and the word of the Lord continued to spread  
through the whole region.

The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers  
and the leading men of the city,

stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas,  
and expelled them from their territory.

So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them,  
and went to Iconium.

The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

**Responsorial Psalm PS 100:1-2, 3, 5**

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R. (3c) **We are his people, the sheep of his flock.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;  
serve the LORD with gladness;  
come before him with joyful song.

**First Holy Communion 2016**  
(Year C—4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter)

R. **We are his people, the sheep of his flock.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

Know that the LORD is God;  
he made us, his we are;  
his people, the flock he tends.

R. **We are his people, the sheep of his flock.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

The LORD is good:  
his kindness endures forever,  
and his faithfulness, to all generations.

R. **We are his people, the sheep of his flock.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

**Reading 2 REV 7:9, 14B-17**

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I, John, had a vision of a great multitude,  
which no one could count,  
from every nation, race, people, and tongue.  
They stood before the throne and before the Lamb,  
wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.

Then one of the elders said to me,  
“These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress;  
they have washed their robes  
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“For this reason they stand before God’s throne  
and worship him day and night in his temple.  
The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.  
They will not hunger or thirst anymore,  
nor will the sun or any heat strike them.  
For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne  
will shepherd them  
and lead them to springs of life-giving water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

**Alleluia JN 10:14**

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R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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*First Holy Communion 2016*  
(Year C—4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter)

**Gospel** **JN 10:27-30**

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Jesus said:

“My sheep hear my voice;

I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

No one can take them out of my hand.

My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,

and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand.

The Father and I are one.”