

## Reflection for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

This Sunday is the Fourth Sunday of the Easter Season and the common name for this Sunday is Good Shepherd Sunday. Here in the United States of America on the second Sunday of May we celebrate Mother's Day. As a Catholic Church for the last 62 years, we have embraced the fourth Sunday of Easter as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. At the very least May 11, 2025, seems to be a very busy Sunday with these three events. Here in our Parish, we are celebrating First Holy Communion this Sunday at our 9:00 AM Mass. This past Friday we celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation for our High School Students. This all makes for a very busy weekend. With all that is going on at our Parish this weekend we can easily lose sight of the message that is contained within our Gospel this Sunday.

It might be helpful to note that every year on the Fourth Sunday the Gospel reading for this Sunday is taken from the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John. In the cycle for the Sunday readings A, B and C all have a different Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Easter but all three cycles take the reading from the Gospel of John chapter ten. This chapter in the Gospel of John is 42 verses long and 30 of these verses focus on the message of Jesus the Good Shepherd. The Gospel reading that is in cycle A, speaks of Jesus as the gatekeeper or the gate that only lets in the worthy shepherds into the fold. The message is that the true and good shepherd is Jesus the gatekeeper, but he calls others to help him lead his followers in this world, helping them journey to the new world, the heavenly kingdom. In cycle B the reading from the Gospel of John has Jesus stating in the first verse of the reading that He is the "*Good Shepherd*," and He lays down His life for His sheep. The final cycle, year C, our Gospel Reading today, which is just four verses long, contains the message that the Good Shepherd leads His sheep to eternal life.

This weekend with so much going on in our parish, our Church, with the election of a new Pope, in our community, and in our world. There is a message found within our Gospel reading that should give us comfort and direction. This is the message that Jesus the Good Shepherd leads His sheep to eternal life. As we embrace the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which was started by Pope Paul VI. In praying for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life, may we reflect on how important vocations are considering today's Gospel Reading. We as a people responding to our Good Shepherd need good Priests and Religious to help us in our journey in this world embracing the Sacraments of our faith and looking forward to Eternal Salvation. This Sunday as the children of our Parish receive First Holy Communion, we are reminded of the need and importance of having vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life.

It is truly fitting that on this Sunday with a Gospel Reading focused on Jesus the Good Shepherd we as a Church title this Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Easter as Good Shepherd Sunday. For every year on the Fourth Sunday of Easter the Gospel Reading is taken from the Gospel of John chapter 10, and we hear of Jesus our Messiah reaching out to the world as the Good Shepherd leading His sheep to eternal Salvation, protecting them from all snares and traps, leading them safely home. Jesus, Himself promoted the idea and image of Him as the Good Shepherd, and this image has been embraced by the Church. As early as the second century there were found images of Christ the Good Shepherd in Christian art. Some Scholars claim that the image of Christ the Good Shepherd is found among some of the first Christian art that has been found in the catacombs. To this day we can look around our homes and Churches and see images of Christ the Good Shepherd, reminding us that He is here to lead us to eternal salvation.

On this second Sunday of May as we here in the United States celebrate Mother's Day, we should take the time to thank our mothers for the gift of life that they chose to give us and to pray for all mothers in our Church and community. It is interesting to note that one of the reasons that Ann Reeves Jarvis stated for creating the committee in 1868 to promote Mother's Day was to help reunite families that had been divided by the Civil War. The Committee felt that by having a day to celebrate mothers would be a way to bring

people together and facilitate healing for families and a divided nation. Moms in many ways can remind us of the qualities that we find in Christ the Good Shepherd. It is also the Good Shepherd that is here to not only guide the mothers of our community, but to guide all of us on the path the eternal salvation.

The message that we take away from this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter is truly a heart-warming one. It is a message that reminds us that Jesus will never leave us, He will never abandon us, He is here to guide us and help us in every moment of our lives. In our Gospel Readings for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays of Easter we hear of the Disciples not being left alone, but Jesus appearing to them and reminding them to just follow Him. In both cases we hear how Jesus, the Risen Lord, reached out to them in their time of need and helped them find their way. May we take comfort in the fact that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was there for His Disciples and members of the early Church. But may we know that the Good Shepherd is here for us today, leading us in this world and to eternal salvation.