



OUR MISSION, OUR MESSAGE: Share Christ with the World Easter Season 2021

We are on mission to Share Christ with the World - as Christian stewards, as disciples individually, and working together as the community of Saint Mary Magdalen. Our message follows the course of the Easter Season scripture, through the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel instruction from the Risen Jesus.

This is the season when we examine our role in the Easter story – witnesses to the love of the Christ and called to build a new community. This week, we consider how Christ is our Good Shepherd.

Prayer to Share the Joy of Easter

Good and gracious God, Our most glorious Creator, We praise you in this Easter season.
Change our lives, change our hearts to be messengers of Easter joy and hope.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord forever and ever. AMEN

Oración para compartir la alegría de la Pascua

Dios bueno y misericordioso, Nuestro más glorioso Creador,
Te alabamos en esta temporada de Pascua y siempre.
Cambia nuestras vidas, cambia nuestros corazones para ser mensajeros
de la alegría y la esperanza pascuales.
Te lo pedimos por Jesucristo, nuestro Señor resucitado por los siglos de los siglos. AMÉN

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – April 25, 2021

First Reading: ACTS 4:8-12

Second Reading: JN 3:1-2

GOSPEL JN 10:11-18

Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them.

This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father;
and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again.

No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.

This command I have received from my Father."

The Gospel presents Jesus as the model Shepherd in his spirit of dedication and willingness to surrender his life for his sheep. The letter of John speaks of the graced outcome of the Shepherd's death: our becoming children of God. Peter, in Acts, says to reject Jesus is to reject the cornerstone. This Jesus, moreover, is the only way to the Father, as Peter tells his listeners. In him alone is salvation, which is now extended to all humanity. The world is the mission field.

DISCUSSION

The 1st reading echoes Psalm 118, "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone."

Who are some modern examples of "rejected cornerstones"—people whose cause or work is not accepted by the general masses? Have you had a personal experience of being rejected for what you believe or for a cause you feel strongly about?

In the Gospel, we gain insight into Jesus's dream of how the world might be. While "the wolf" attacks the flock in order to "catch and scatter," Jesus is the shepherd who leads not only the flock he is currently tending, but "other sheep that do not belong to this fold." In searching for the scattered and gathering the lost until they know his voice, Jesus does the work of his Father who desires that all should be found, welcomed and cherished in the family of God.

1. **What is the difference between a hireling and a shepherd when it comes to caring for people?** How is Jesus way different – "good"? What best describes your experiences, of servanthood – good shepherd, brother's keeper, sisterly love, good neighbor? What challenges you to be a Christ-like servant? Fear of unknown, rejection, skills, comfort?
2. **Our world is full of voices telling us what to think, eat, buy... where to turn ... how to do this and that – and what to believe.** Do an "inventory" of your influencers – does the Word or Prayer get enough listening time? If yes, how do you keep your focus? If not, discuss among the group how you may find balance.

ON MISSION

Jesus' reference to other sheep and one flock underscores universality and unity, characterizing this new community of believers. Jesus' way of shepherding the flock is not one of domination, but of care and concern. True sheep are the ones who hear the Shepherd's voice and feel his love.

1. **Why is the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd so popular with people?** What other images of Jesus do you like? Who is Christ to you? Consider the "Cornerstone" description. Consider the seven "I AM" passages by John.

I am the Bread of Life

I am the Good Shepherd

I am the Light of the World

I am the Way, the Truth, the Life

I am the Resurrection and the Life

I am the True Vine

I am the Door

2. **What about you?** You are a child of God. Use this to "practice" sharing your believer story within your small group. How would you complete this sentence...?" I AM" a child of God.... [and I believe that ...or, and I know this because...or, and I feel that when...].

"I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold, there also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd."

3. **Jesus and the Resurrection story is shared through our witness.** This is how the other sheep will also "hear" his voice. The lost are invited and introduced by us and welcomed and accompanied by community on the path to the sheepfold. We are all called to be "a good shepherd" in the spaces we tend - in the family, at work, in the community.

Last week, our mission was to invite someone to Church (or another faith experience). How did that go? Have you had opportunity? Is there someone you hope to bring into the sheepfold?

