

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Good Shepherd

INTRODUCTION

A shepherd's lonely job was to find food for his sheep and to protect them from wild animals. Today we hear how Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and then sing the Candle Song together.

SORRY

Close your eyes and think about all the things which have happened over the past week. Have we always been as kind and thoughtful as we should have been? Have we done anything to make God feel sad or disappointed with us? If we are truly sorry in our hearts then God our father will always forgive us.

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 5.

GOSPEL (JOHN 10:2-5, 9-11)

One day Jesus said to the crowds, "A shepherd knows his sheep, and his sheep know him. When he calls their names, they know his voice and they follow him, one by one, through the gate of the sheepfold.

"The shepherd walks ahead of them showing them the way. He guides and protects them from danger and harm. The flock will not follow a stranger, instead they scatter and run away because they do not know his voice."

Then Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd, I know my own and my own know me. If anyone follows me, I will lead them safely on their journey to the fullness of everlasting life."

DISCUSSION

How did the sheep recognize their shepherd? They knew the sound of his voice, and he was

able to call each one of them by their name.

If you were a shepherd in charge of a flock what would you have to do to take care of it? You would

—make sure that the sheep have plenty to eat;

—make sure that none of them wander or get lost;

—protect them from thieves and wild animals;

—find them shelter from bad weather.

In the land where Jesus lived, there is very little grass, and the shepherd must lead his sheep from place to place to find enough food to eat. (Show any pictures you can find of such terrain.) Often it is steep and hilly, and the sheep must carefully follow their shepherd along the path that he shows them. They rely on him to find food and water for them and to protect them from wild animals.

Why did Jesus call himself the Good Shepherd? Like the shepherd, Jesus will stay with us always. He knows all of us by name and calls us to follow him. He will lead us along the right path to heaven and will protect us from harm along the way. With him before us we can feel safe and secure because we can trust him to take care of all our needs.

ACTIVITY

Make a large picture of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leading his flock along a path. Each child can write their name on a sheep, stick on several pieces of cotton, and add their sheep to the scene. Or, give each child a copy of this coloring picture and have the children glue cotton balls onto the sheep.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

The Lord is my shepherd,

he gives me everything I need.

He leads me to lie down in green meadows

and to drink beside cool, deep pools.

He is my strength and protection

and guides me along the right path.

Even in times of darkness and trouble

I will not be afraid,

for he is always beside me

and will protect me from harm.

I know that his goodness and love

will stay with me all the days of my life.

(Psalm 23:1-4, 6)

