

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Good Shepherd

INTRODUCTION

Jesus takes care of us just as a good shepherd takes care of his sheep. He knows each one of us, and we know him and are glad to follow him wherever he leads.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and say Candle Prayer 2.

SORRY

Listen carefully to this reading:

God is full of kindness and love, and always ready to show us the path to follow. He leads us with patience and understanding, and forgives us if we stray and lose our way. When we look to him for help, he rescues us from harm and helps us to try again, because his forgiveness is unending. (Psalm 25:10-16)

(Pause for a few moments of silence.)

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd.

Forgive us if we have wandered
away from your path
and guide us back to your love.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 3.

GOSPEL (JOHN 10:11-15)

One day Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd, who is ready to die for his sheep. A man who is hired to look after the flock does not really care about it, because he knows that the sheep do not really belong to him. When the hungry wolf appears, the man runs away, and the sheep are worried or scattered. I know each of my sheep by name, and they know the sound of my voice. They will always follow me, and I am ready to give up my life for them."

DISCUSSION

A shepherd is someone who looks after sheep. What do you think makes a good shepherd? A good shepherd cares for all the needs of his sheep: finding them pasture and water and shelter from the weather, and protecting them from wild animals and danger. He watches over them at all times and knows each of them individually.

What did Jesus say about the hired man? A hired man was paid to look after a flock of sheep. The sheep did not belong to him, and he didn't particularly care about them. So when a wolf appeared, the hired man worried more about his own safety and abandoned the flock.

How would you describe a sheep to someone? They are timid and gentle animals, which like to be kept together within their flock. They are not particularly clever and get themselves into all sorts of trouble unless someone takes care of them.

Jesus is the "Good Shepherd," and we are his flock. He told this story to make us understand that he cares for us as much as the shepherd cares for his sheep. He watches over us at all times and knows each of us by name. He goes before us to guide us and keep us from all harm. He takes care of all our needs, and we can trust in his goodness.

Jesus' love was so strong that he was willing to suffer and die on the cross for our sakes. His sacrifice meant that we can follow him to his heavenly kingdom, where we will share eternal life with him.

ACTIVITY

Using the template given (it will need to be enlarged slightly), cut out some sheep masks from stiff cardboard. Attach these to a stick and help the children to glue cotton balls to the masks.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd,
and we are your flock.

Help us to know your voice
and always follow you.

