

**SPIRITUALITY**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

John 10:14

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;

I know my sheep, and mine know me.

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

**Gospel**

John 10:11-18; L50B

**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."**

**Reflecting on the Gospel**

This Sunday's gospel presents us with one of the most loved images of Jesus when he says of himself, "I am the good shepherd." We are sometimes seduced by images of a smiling Middle Eastern shepherd with a cuddly, clean, and fluffy lamb tucked under his arm. Much less romantic and more accurate and robust is the earliest known statue (ca. 60 CE) of the Good Shepherd at Caesarea Maritima in Israel. The legless remnant has a huge, heavy sheep draped around

the shepherd's shoulders. To carry such a load would be no easy task! In 1 Samuel, we have another vigorous Old Testament description of a shepherd in the context of King Saul's attempt to dissuade the young David from fighting against the mighty Philistine warrior, Goliath. David argues his case for the fight with a graphic description of how he kept sheep for his father: "[W]henver a lion or bear came to carry off a sheep from the flock, I would chase after it, attack it, and snatch the prey from its mouth. If it attacked me, I would seize it by the throat, strike it, and kill it. . . . The same LORD who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (17:34-35, 37; NABRE).

As our Good Shepherd, Jesus fights for us, saves us from the gaping jaws of whatever or whoever seeks to grab and destroy our discipleship and wound the little "flock" of the Christian

community. He shepherds us with his loving care so that we may "have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10; NABRE).

In contrast to the Good Shepherd is the hireling who is concerned primarily with his own self-interest: his reputation, remuneration, and safety. Through the prophets, God had denounced the shepherd leaders of Israel who had prostituted their pastoral ministry. "I myself will pasture my sheep," God promises his people (Ezek 34:15; NABRE; cf. Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10). There are still some political, social, and ecclesial "hired men" with us, but there are also the magnificent shepherds who are willing to lay down their life for their sheep. In *Oscar Romero: Memories in Mosaic*, Maria López collects the memories of two hundred people who had lived, prayed, and worked with such a shepherd—Archbishop Oscar Romero. Here is one:

One morning in rainy season when the skies were heavy with the day's rain, a man in rags, with a shirt full of holes and hair made curly by dust, covered with dust, was cleaning (Romero's) tomb carefully with one of his rags. When he left to go out, I felt I needed to talk to him.

"Why do you do that?"

"Do what?"

"Clean Monseñor's tomb."

"Because he was my father."

"What do you mean . . .?"

"It's like this. I'm just a poor man, you know? Sometimes I make some money carrying things for people in the market in a little cart. And sometimes I spend it all on liquor and end up lying hungover on the streets. But I never get discouraged. I had a father! I did! He made me feel like a person. Because he loved people like



me and didn't act like we made him sick. He talked to us, he touched us, he asked us questions. He had confidence in us. You could see in his eyes that he cared about me. Like parents love their children. That's why I clean off his tomb, because that's what children do."

As a child, as a son, Jesus the Good Shepherd lives, dies, and is raised to life in the power of the mutual love between him and his Father. Into this love Jesus gathers his disciples so that they may also share in it.

**Focusing the Gospel**

**Key words and phrases:** "[T]here will be one flock, one shepherd."

**To the point:** In today's passage from the parable of the Good Shepherd, we find another 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 also "other sheep that do not belong to this fold." In gathering the lost and searching for the scattered, Jesus does the work of his Father who desires that all should be found, welcomed, loved, and cherished in the family of God.

**Connecting the Gospel**

**to the first reading:** Today's first reading continues where it left off last Sunday, only now Peter and John find themselves arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. The religious authorities are concerned over the attention and excitement John and Peter have incurred due to their healing of the crippled man at the temple gates. Peter's speech is prompted by the question put to him by the high priest, elders, and scribes, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" (4:7; NABRE). In the gospel, Jesus names himself as the good shepherd who "lays down his life for the sheep." In the first reading Peter identifies Jesus as the savior of all, stating, "There is no salvation through anyone else." In both the gospel and the first reading we come face-to-face with Jesus, the healer, and Jesus, the redeemer. During his life Jesus healed the broken and forgave sinners. Now his work of salvation continues on as his followers heal and forgive, not in their own names, but in the name of "Jesus Christ the Nazorean," the crucified and the risen one.

**to experience:** As members of God's people, we experience Jesus in the healing touch or word of another and also when we are led by the Spirit to minister to others in Jesus's name. In your path as a disciple, do you find yourself more often as the giver or receiver of this grace?

**Connecting the Responsorial Psalm**

**to the readings:** Today's psalm tells us, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." We see this lived out in the experiences of Peter and John in the Acts of the Apostles. Filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit newly descended upon them, the two apostles heal a crippled man, stating, "[I]n the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk" (Acts 3:6; NABRE). In today's first reading, their faith does not falter as they are brought before the Sanhedrin due to the crowd's excitement about this healing and about Peter's preaching afterward. In blessing they healed the man, and as *the* blessed they have courage and peace in defending their faith before those who had recently succeeded in bringing Jesus to the cross.

**to psalmist preparation:** As a cantor, how do you experience your ministry as a blessing done "in the name of the Lord"?

**PROMPTS FOR FAITH-SHARING**

In the first reading we hear of "a cripple" who was healed in the name of Jesus. What areas in your life are in need of healing at this moment?

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Today's responsorial psalm proclaims, "The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone." What examples of this have you seen in your community?

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In the reading from the first letter of St. Peter, we find a description of Christ's non-violent response to his persecutors. How do you try to emulate his actions?

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In the gospel parable Jesus says, "A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Who are the sheep that you are called to shepherd and how do you give of your life for them?

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