

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Easter

This is a celebration of the Word to aid your worship this Sunday, alone or with family. If possible, place a simple cross or crucifix prominently in the room and light one or more candles. You can also place an image of the Virgin Mary there if possible. As a family, choose the one who leads the prayer, and someone to do the readings.

Whoever leads the prayer can say:

In the Acts of the Apostles Peter stands up with the Eleven and preaches about Jesus, our “Lord and Christ.” When the people hear that it is by Christ’s wounds that they have been healed, they themselves are “cut to the heart.” They beg, “What are we to do, brothers?” because they have found in the witness of the apostles an authority they are eager to follow. This is what Jesus means when he says that the Good Shepherd walks ahead of his sheep, and that the sheep follow him “because they recognize his voice.” Jesus continues to call us authoritatively through the Church. Good Shepherd Sunday celebrates the fulfillment of “the promise made to us” that God will send a Shepherd who will give us life “more abundantly.”

SIGN OF THE CROSS

After a moment of silence, let everyone begin by making the Sign of the Cross:

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN

Choose an appropriate hymn.

We place ourselves before the Lord, beginning with an act of contrition:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

The following are the readings of the 4th Sunday of Easter.

**A reading from
the Acts of the Apostles**

2:14a, 36-41

THEN PETER stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: “Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.” He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, “Save yourselves from this

corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

————•PSALM 23•————

R (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Or: Alleluia.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul. **R**

He guides me in right paths
for his name’s sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff
that give me courage. **R**

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. **R**

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for years to come. **R**

**A reading from
the first Letter of Saint Peter**

2:20b-25

BELOVED: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps.

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.

When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia, alleluia. I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;/ I know my sheep, and mine know me. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the gate for the sheep.

**A reading from
the holy Gospel according to John**

10:1-10

JESUS SAID: “AMEN, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gate-keeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Allow for a few minutes of silence and meditation. In a family, the leader could offer some words of consolation at this moment, such as: “Lord Jesus, our Shepherd and our Savior, continue to give us your grace so that we can recognize and follow you. We praise you for your glorious and radiant wounds, the wounds in which we find refuge in the brokenness of our world. Preserve us from all harm, and from all the snares of the enemy, who seeks to steal and destroy our peace and our happiness. You are the gate to the perfect and eternal pasture of heavenly bliss!”

M E D I T A T I O N O F T H E D A Y

The Voice of the Good Shepherd

Christ is the Good Shepherd; he calls his sheep by name and leads them forth. We, his flock, know his voice and we share his concern to gather his people together, to lead them on the way of salvation.... Let yourselves be summoned by the love of Christ; recognize his voice which rings in the temple of your heart. Receive his luminous and penetrating glance which opens the paths of your life upon the horizons of the mission of the Church, today more than ever committed to teaching man his true being, his end, his destiny, and to revealing to faithful souls the unspeakable riches of the love of Christ. Have no fear of the fact that the response he requires is radical, because Jesus, who has first loved you, is ready to give what he asks of you. If he asks much it is because he knows that you can give much. Young people, give the Church a hand in the task of saving the world of youth. React against the culture of death by means of the culture of life....

Lord, Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of our souls, you who know your sheep and know how to reach man’s heart, open the minds and hearts of those...who search for and

await a word of truth for their lives; let them understand that only in the mystery of your Incarnation do they find full light; arouse the courage of those who know where to seek the truth, but fear that what you ask will be too demanding; stir the heart of those who would follow you, but who cannot overcome doubts and fears, and who in the end follow other voices and other paths which lead nowhere. You who are the Word of the Father, the Word which creates and saves, the Word which enlightens and sustains hearts, conquer with your Spirit the resistance and delays of indecisive hearts; arouse in those whom you call the courage of love's answer: Here I am, send me! (Is 6:8).

Virgin Mary, young daughter of Israel, support with your motherly love those whom the Father will grant that they hear his voice.... Let them repeat with you the *yes* of a joyful and irrevocable gift of self. Amen.

SAINT JOHN PAUL II

Saint John Paul II († 2005) reigned as pope from 1978 until 2005.

INTERCESSIONS

The leader can begin with these words:

Entrusting ourselves to God the Father who judges justly and holds us firmly in his hand, and with hearts filled with confidence we now pray:

R Lord, hear our prayer.

For the bishops, the shepherds of the Church: that they will be filled with the zeal and have the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

That those who govern will favor truth, justice, and a commitment to peace, and will continue to deal prudently and effectively with the pandemic. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

For those who have gone astray like sheep: that they will hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, the guardian of their souls, and return to the pasture. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

For children who have been preparing to receive First Holy Communion: that the gift of the Holy Eucharist will draw them into an unending friendship with the Lord. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

For an increase in vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, especially from our own parish community. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

For all healthcare workers, and for the sick and the dying: that they be comforted by the presence of the Good Shepherd as they walk through this bitter valley. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

For the grace this week to hear and follow the voice of Jesus in all we do. Let us pray to the Lord. **R**

Personal intentions

Our Father....

An Act of Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and lead us to everlasting life. And may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

To conclude the celebration, you can sing or recite the following or another suitable hymn. Turn and face an image of Mary, if you have one.



Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia,
has risen as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary,
alleluia!

R For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia!

Or:

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia,
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia;
ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

V Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria, alleluia.

R Quia surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia.

MAGNIFICAT is now offering complimentary access to its iOS and Android Apps throughout May. To register for free access in English, visit www.magnificat.com/free.

The Month of May with Mary

“...It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity....

I am also providing two prayers to our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you....

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.”

—Pope Francis, April 25, 2020

FIRST PRAYER

O Mary,
You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross,
were united with Jesus’ suffering,
and persevered in your faith.

“Protectress of the Roman people,”
you know our needs,
and we know that you will provide,
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.
For he took upon himself our suffering,
and burdened himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection.
Amen.

We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God; Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from every danger, O Glorious and Blessed Virgin.

SECOND PRAYER

“We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God.”

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.

Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers, and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity, and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude, and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realise that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.