

Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 26, 2015
Church of St. Leo the Great, Oakland, CA
Henry Ormond, O. Carm.

Reading **1ACTS 4:8-12**

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said:

“Leaders of the people and elders:

If we are being examined today
about a good deed done to a cripple,
namely, by what means he was saved,
then all of you and all the people of Israel should know
that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean
whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead;
in his name this man stands before you healed.

He is *the stone rejected by you, the builders,
which has become the cornerstone.*

There is no salvation through anyone else,
nor is there any other name under heaven
given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”

Responsorial Psalm **PS 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29**

R. (22) The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior.

The stone which the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;
it is wonderful in our eyes.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his kindness endures forever.

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

Reading 21 JN 3:1-2

Beloved:

See what love the Father has bestowed on us
that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us
is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;
what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,
for we shall see him as he is.

Alleluia JN 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 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."

Homily

Today is often known as "Good Shepherd Sunday," a day when we can reflect on Jesus' well known description of himself. In the Gospel, Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Now Jesus' listeners were largely made up of the poor and the powerless, who would immediately understand what he was saying. A shepherd in their culture had little standing. It was dirty, dangerous work. Shepherds were underpaid and not appreciated. They were at the bottom of the social ladder. Yet, the sheep depended upon them for their very lives. A shepherd knew every one of his flock, and the sheep knew his voice instantly, and responded.

In today's Gospel, Jesus is telling us about himself and his relationship with his disciples. "I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

You and I know what a good shepherd Jesus is. He loves us so much that he willingly died on the cross for all his sheep down through the ages. All of his sheep are sinners and his loving death has freed us from our sins, and his resurrection has given us a share in his new life.

Jesus tells us more: "I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father." Because Jesus has loved us and called us to be his disciples, he has invited us into a special intimacy with him: the same intimacy he shares with his Father -- a divine intimacy.

How can anyone pass up that invitation?

The more we open ourselves and respond to Jesus' invitation, we realize how life changing our response is. And we are not alone. All disciples around us and in our world are making the same effort we are, allowing that divine intimacy to transform the way we live our daily lives. Our efforts support the working of grace in all.

The Eucharist we share nourishes our divine intimacy with Jesus and with one another. Our Good Shepherd gives us his body to eat and his blood to drink and he promises us eternal life.

As we allow the divine intimacy to grow within us, the words of St. John in the second reading offer us encouragement. "Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. . . . We are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

The whole Easter mystery reveals to us how utterly faithful God is in loving us. We can be faithful in our own loving because God is faithful in loving us.

Jesus has invited us into a special intimacy with him. Let us keep our minds and hearts focused each day on the intimate invitation of Jesus and respond generously as he helps us to do.