



## Fourth Sunday of Easter Christ in Our Neighborhood

### Prayer

Father, we long to follow You and You long to lead us. May Jesus, the Good Shepherd, guide us on Your path of love. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

### Commentary

#### 1st Reading: Acts 4: 8-12

We continue where we left off in last week's first reading, when Peter began to fearlessly proclaim the Holy name of Jesus.

Knowing that he could be martyred for even uttering the name of His crucified savior, Peter boldly professes to those who would listen that Jesus is their Savior as well.

In the name of Jesus, Peter cured a man who was crippled. In His same name, we find salvation.

Peter makes a stunning proclamation:

"There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved."

It is true that we can enter the Kingdom of heaven only through Jesus. However, our Christian faith, beginning with Peter, proclaims that all of us — Christians, Jews, Muslims, atheists, etc.— will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and only through, with, and in Him, we are saved.

Can the Lord save an atheist, agnostic, or one who does not proclaim Jesus? Yes! But, only through the Mercy of Christ. Relying on His Love, we entrust all people to the Mercy of God through Christ.

### Question

How do you pray for those who do not claim Christ as their Savior?

### Commentary

#### 2nd Reading: 1 John 3: 1-12

This letter of John says that the world does not recognize a Christian (a begotten child of God) because it never recognized the Son (Jesus). This implies, therefore, that Christians should recognize other Christians.

So, what does a Christian look like?

It isn't always easy to recognize a Christian. Christians, like the other billions of humans who walk the face of the Earth, blend in with society.

St. Paul said, "I live in this world, but I am not of this world." We, who are Christians, live in this world, but we belong to an everlasting world. The temporary world in which we live is filled with crosses which must be carried daily. However, the real world to which we belong, celebrates an eternal joy of Easter!

Living in this world means that we must honestly and courageously accept our true identity. We are Christian! We are not like others. If I am a father of a family, I am first a "Christian Father." If I am a wife, I am first a "Christian wife." If I am an employer, I am a "Christian employer."

Reacknowledging my identity as a Christian each day will help me to be loving throughout my day. As the song goes: "They'll know we are Christian by our love!"

### Question

How do people recognize me as a Christian?

**This Easter is a period of awakening for those who were recently baptized. They are embracing their new Christian identity. Pray for them!**

## Commentary

### Gospel: John 10: 11-18

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is designated as “Good Shepherd Sunday.” It is also Vocations Sunday, where we acknowledge priests in parishes and pray that they will remain in Christ, the Good Shepherd.

In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus compares His way of shepherding to His contemporary shepherds of the faith. Jesus has concern for His sheep; unlike the hired shepherds. He is even willing to lay down His life for the sheep. He says, “For these sheep I will give my life.”

The Seasons of Lent and Easter celebrate the Good Shepherd who did indeed lay down His life freely and raised it up again so that we could be gathered as one flock in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The one flock includes people of His faith tradition (Jews) and people of other traditions (Gentiles). Jesus says, “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must lead them too.” Our Good Shepherd is truly the Savior of the “whole” world!

## Question

In what way is Jesus the Good Shepherd for you?

## *This Week’s Task*

We are often asked to pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. This week, focus your attention on a particular single person (young or middle-aged), and be a P.E.S.T.:

**P**ray for a specific individual that he/she may be open to the calling of the Lord.

**E**ncourage the individual to consider priesthood or sisterhood/brotherhood. Just ask him/her!

**S**upport the individual. If he/she says yes or no to your request, give him/her your prayerful support.

**T**hank God for giving you the courage to ask.

## Prayer

The leader and group offer together the following prayer for vocations, given by the late Pope Benedict XVI:

“Grant, O Father, that the Church may welcome with joy the numerous inspirations of the Spirit of Your Son and, docile to His teachings, may she care for vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life. Amen.

Sustain, O Lord, bishops, priests and deacons, consecrated men and women, and all the baptized in Christ, so that they may faithfully fulfill their mission at the service of the Gospel. Amen.”

The leader will then guide the group in praying Psalm 118.

## *Psalm*

**Response: Alleluia.**

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. Alleluia.**

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. Alleluia.**

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.

**Conclude with an OUR FATHER**