

A LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR CHILDREN

Fourth Sunday of Easter 2009

Before the Liturgy

Children gather with their families in church for the Introductory Rite of the Mass. After the Opening Song and the Greeting, the children, together with their leaders, are called forward.

Focus

We belong to Jesus. He is the Good Shepherd. A Good Shepherd will protect his sheep and even give his life for them.

Introduction to the Liturgy

- All make the Sign of the Cross.
- What have we come here to do?
- We have come here so that we can listen to God's Word and be helped to understand God's message more easily.
- Today we're going to hear in the Gospel Jesus telling his followers that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep.

Gloria *is led by the musician*

Introduction to the Gospel

Talk to the children about lambs they may have seen at this time of year - tiny new born lambs in the field (if you live in a city perhaps you might have some pictures to show them). All the sheep need protecting, not just these little ones. Shepherds in Jesus' day were a little different from shepherds today; there were no trained Sheep Dogs, instead the shepherd led from the front and the sheep followed. Being a shepherd could be dangerous in rough terrain where there were wild animals. A good shepherd would look after his sheep in danger. In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that he is our Good Shepherd and lays down His life for His sheep.

Gospel Acclamation

Everyone stands to greet the gospel in song

Gospel (John 10:11-18)

The reader proclaims the Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Easter B from the children's lectionary:

Exploring the Scripture

Jesus' sheep are people like me and you. If we are going to follow Jesus, we have to listen to His voice so that we know the right way to go. That can be hard sometimes (grown ups find it difficult too)! We don't hear Jesus' voice the way we hear parents, teachers or friends but we can 'hear' Jesus through the things that others do and say. We can hear Jesus in a way that is hard to explain. When we are praying or listening to God's word in Church we enjoy a special moment in our week to hear Jesus speak to us. We believe that Jesus loves us and cares for us like a shepherd.

The Leader guides a dialogue with the children to highlight the following:

- We follow Jesus like sheep follow their shepherd.
- People follow Jesus in many different ways: by marrying and having children, by being a priest, a religious sister or deacon. This is sometimes called a vocation.
- Sheep are gentle creatures; Jesus wants his followers to be gentle and meek as well. With His help, our lives can be filled with kindness, mercy, love and generosity.
- We are thankful that Jesus has not left us alone but watches over us. He is always ready to lead us back on the path of doing the right things and therefore being the right person.

Practical Task

- Make cut-outs or find a picture of a wolf, rain clouds or other things that sheep need protecting from.
- Place these some distance from a picture of Jesus, The Good Shepherd.
- Write on some sticky labels or on sheep cut-outs the things that lead us away from Jesus, (being selfish, being hurtful, telling lies etc.) and on another set of sticky labels/sheep cut-outs write the things we do when we are following Jesus (e.g. sharing, forgiving others, helping).
- Go through the labels one by one and ask the children to sort them either near to the dangers or near to Jesus, The Good Shepherd.

Then, we respond in prayer (perhaps repeating this prayer, line by line after the leader):

*Jesus, our good shepherd, we thank you for loving us and watching over us.
You gave your life for us on the cross, so that we could live with you for ever.
Help us to hear your voice and to follow you always... Amen*

Intercessions

Each Intercession to be followed by an appropriate response (Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer)

Leader: We pray to God our Father for our needs.

Reader: We pray for Benedict our Pope, our bishop N and all priests that they may help people grow closer to Jesus.

We pray for all married people, those who are preparing to marry and for our own families.

We pray for all those who serve Jesus as monks, nuns, religious sisters and brothers. May God help them as they serve in Jesus' name.

We pray for ourselves that we will hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd. As we grow older we ask that God will guide us in our vocation and help us to be good Christians.

Leader: Father, help us to follow your son Jesus. May he guide us, and watch over us like a good shepherd. Help us to listen to his voice, so that we live good and holy lives. Amen.

The children and their leaders return to join the assembly in the church for the preparation of the gifts.