

A Suggested Liturgy of the Word for Children. Fourth Sunday of Easter, 25th April 2010

Before the Liturgy

The Children gather with their families in the Church for the Introductory Rite of the Mass. After the Greeting, the children together with their teachers and leaders, collect their book of the gospels and go to their space for the liturgy of the word.

Welcoming the Children

- We gather together and take our places
- We light the candle and place the children's book of the gospels on the table
- We make the sign of the cross together

Introducing the theme

Today's gospel contains Jesus' promise that he knows each one of us, and that he cares for each one of us – like a shepherd caring for his sheep. Jesus calls each one of us to share in his life, and part of that life is about joining him in caring for his sheep. This call, this invitation is called a 'vocation'.

Opening Prayer

God our Father, we gather here today in your name.
We know that you love us so much,
that you gave Jesus your only Son, to be our shepherd
Help us to listen to his voice,
so that we can share in his life and so come home to you.
We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Gospel (John 10:27-30)

A Gloria and/or a Gospel Acclamation may be sung

The Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Easter Year C is now read from the children's lectionary

Discussion Points

Talk to the children about some of the scenes in the countryside they may have seen. The new born lambs in the field (you may wish to use pictures). All the sheep need looking after, not just the little ones. The shepherd's job is to look after the sheep given him to look after. In Jesus' time, shepherd's did not have sheep dogs to help, instead the shepherd led the sheep from the front. The shepherd led his sheep out of danger, and led them to food and water so that they would live. The shepherd would live with his sheep, always making sure that they were safe and well. The sheep knew and trusted their own shepherd and his voice, and the shepherd also knew what his own sheep looked like.

Jesus used this idea of sheep and shepherds to speak about his love and care for his followers – you and me. Jesus is our shepherd and we are his sheep. He wants us to keep us from danger and lead us to a safe and happy life. We can follow Jesus in many different ways but each one of us is invited by Jesus to help him care for his sheep – this is what we call a vocation.

Let us think of people who Jesus has called to help him in caring for us and for one another.

- Who do you know like Jesus, the Good Shepherd?
- Who looks after you, loves you, and cares for you? (perhaps you can talk of parents, teachers, priests, religious sisters or brothers you may know)

- How is Jesus asking you to care for his sheep/people?
 - At your age now
 - When you are older
- How do you think Jesus the Good Shepherd might invite you to join his team, in caring for his sheep/people?
- What gifts and talents do you think you need to be a helper of Jesus in caring for others?

Suitable Activities

- a) On a prepared poster (with a landscape of a field, with a thorn bush, a lake, a marsh, a cliff, a wolf and a path leading through these to 'good field/pasture' & Jesus the good shepherd) have the children write their names on sheep cut out shapes and ask them where they are going to place their sheep and why (discuss with them the hazards). Perhaps the hazards could have labels such as (e.g. thorn bush = telling lies, wolf = selfishness, etc) and the good pasture the qualities that Jesus leads us to e.g. peace, forgiveness, generosity/sharing with others etc.).
- b) Get a picture or an actual shepherd's crook. Talk about what a crook is used for i.e. pulling sheep out of trouble (the head), guiding the sheep (i.e. the staff), or defending the sheep (i.e. using it to hit out against a wolf), also be testing the ground (prodding loose rocks or marsh land). Who else has a 'crook' (the bishop's crosier)? Discuss why a bishop has a crook/crosier as leader of our diocese? Perhaps discuss the role of the bishop in being a pastor/shepherd of the church (and a helper/co-worker of Jesus). Use a picture of the local bishop. Have the children colour a picture of Christ the Good Shepherd (preferably with a crook rather than just a lamb around the shoulders).

Final Prayer

Jesus in our gospel today, tells us that his sheep listen to his voice, let us now be quiet for a moment asking Jesus for help in listening to him.

God our Father, thank you, for giving Jesus to be our shepherd, our saviour, and our friend; help us always to listen to his guiding voice and to know that he is always near to us.

Thank you for all who join in Jesus' care for us: as parents, priests, sisters, brothers and teachers. And help us to understand how Jesus is calling us to share in his life and his work of caring for those around us. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The children then join the main congregation in Church for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.