



# DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

## Children's Liturgy of the Word

### Fourth Sunday of Easter

#### Overview

The Fourth Sunday of Easter, also known as "Good Shepherd Sunday," focuses on Jesus as the Good Shepherd who knows, loves, and protects His followers. The readings highlight the relationship between Christ and His followers through themes such as listening to His voice and receiving eternal life.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, lays down His life for His sheep, showing His care and protection. A key part of this celebration is recognizing and listening to Jesus' voice, which we do through prayer and studying the Scriptures.

He promises eternal life and assures His followers that they are safe in His hands. The readings remind us that Christ's mission includes all people and nations.

Good Shepherd Sunday invites us to reflect on our relationship with Jesus and to pray for those called to be shepherds in the Church. It emphasizes God's love, care, and the importance of listening to His guidance.

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## Background

**Acts 13:14, 43-52:** This passage comes from the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. They are in Antioch of Pisidia, a city in modern-day Turkey. Paul often begins his ministry in a new city by preaching in the local synagogue. Paul's sermon (summarized in earlier verses) recounts the history of Israel and culminates in the proclamation of Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises. He emphasizes Jesus' death and resurrection as the means of salvation. When rejected, they turn to the Gentiles. This reading illustrates the spread of the Gospel and the inclusion of all who believe. Despite facing opposition, the disciples are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

**Psalms 100** is a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. It's one of the "Thanksgiving Psalms," sung in gratitude to God for His blessings. It is a call to joyful worship and recognition of God's goodness, steadfast love, and faithfulness. It emphasizes that God is our maker and that we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.

**Revelation 7:9, 14-17:** The Book of Revelation is a highly symbolic and apocalyptic text, written to encourage Christians facing persecution. This reading is a vision of a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne of God, worshipping Him. They have been purified through the blood of the Lamb and will be sheltered and guided by God, who will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

**John 10:27-30:** This passage is part of Jesus' "Good Shepherd Discourse" in John 10. He contrasts Himself with the false shepherds who do not care for the sheep. Jesus declares that His sheep hear His voice, He knows them, and they follow Him. He gives them eternal life, and they will never perish. Jesus emphasizes His unity with the Father, reinforcing the security and power of their bond. Jesus declares, "The Father and I are one." This is a profound statement of His divinity and His inseparable relationship with God. It reinforces the idea that those who are in Christ are also in the Father's care.

### Key Message for Children

- † Jesus is Our Good Shepherd: Jesus loves us and takes care of us like a shepherd takes care of his sheep. He wants us to listen to Him and follow Him.
- † Sharing the Good News: It's important to share the good news about Jesus with everyone, even if some people don't want to listen.
- † Thank You, God: We should be happy and thank God for making and loving us.
- † Listen to Jesus. He wants us to listen to His voice (through prayer, the Bible, and good people) and follow Him so we can be safe and happy with Him forever.

### Key Message for Leaders

- † Emphasize the perseverance of Paul and Barnabas in sharing the Gospel.
- † Explore the different ways we can express gratitude to God.
- † Emphasize God's promise to comfort and care for those who have endured trials for their faith.
- † Explain the significance of Jesus' statement, "The Father and I are one," and its implications for our understanding of the Trinity.
- † Encourage them to pray for vocations to the priesthood and religious life, recognizing the importance of having good shepherds to guide the flock.
- † Inspire them to be witnesses of Christ's love and compassion in their families and schools.

### Self-Reflection Questions for Leaders

- † How do I experience Jesus as the Good Shepherd in my life?
- † Am I actively seeking out and caring for those who are lost, vulnerable, or marginalized?
- † How can I deepen my own understanding of the readings and their relevance to my life?
- † What specific steps can I take to prepare myself spiritually for this session?

## The Liturgy

### Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

**Priest:** (in these or similar words)

**Just like the Good Shepherd cares for His sheep, we want you to be cared for and learn about Jesus in a way that's just right for you. Go now to your special Liturgy of the Word, listen to the stories, and grow closer to Jesus, our Good Shepherd. May God bless you!**

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

### Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

**Let us pray:**

(pause for a few seconds)

**Good Shepherd, Jesus, thank you for loving us and taking care of us. Help us to hear your voice today and to follow you always. Amen.**

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

## Readings

### FIRST READING

Acts 13.14, 43-52

*I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles.*

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

- 14 Paul and Barnabas went on from Perga  
and came to Antioch in Pisidia.  
On the sabbath day, they went into the synagogue and sat down.
- 43 When the meeting of the synagogue broke up,  
many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas,  
who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.
- 44 The next sabbath, almost the whole city gathered  
to hear the word of the Lord.
- 45 But when the Jewish officials saw the crowds, they were filled with  
jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul.
- 46 Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying,  
"It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you.  
Since you reject it and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life,  
we are now turning to the Gentiles.
- 47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,  
'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,  
so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"
- 48 When the Gentiles heard this,  
they were glad and praised the word of the Lord;  
and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers.
- 49 Thus, the word of the Lord spread throughout the region.
- 50 But the officials incited the devout women of high standing  
and the leading men of the city,  
and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas,  
and drove them out of their region.
- 51 So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them,  
and went to Iconium.
- 52 And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

The word of the Lord.

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 100.1-2, 3, 5

**R.** We are God's people, the sheep of his pasture.

**1** Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

**2** Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into his presence with singing. **R.**

**3** Know that the Lord is God.  
It is he that made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. **R.**

**5** For the Lord is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
and his faithfulness to all generations. **R.**

## SECOND READING

### Revelation 7.9, 14-17

*The Lamb will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life.*

A reading from the book of Revelation.

- 9 After this, I, John, looked,  
and there was a great multitude that no one could count,  
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,  
standing before the throne and before the Lamb,  
robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.
- 14 And one of the elders then said to me,  
"These are they who have come out of the great ordeal;  
they have washed their robes  
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
- 15 For this reason, they are before the throne of God,  
and worship him day and night within his temple,  
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.
- 16 "They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;  
the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;
- 17 for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

The word of the Lord.

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*



The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

## GOSPEL

John 10.27 30

*I give my sheep eternal life.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus said:

- 27 "My sheep hear my voice.  
I know them, and they follow me.
- 28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.  
No one will snatch them out of my hand.
- 29 What my Father has given me is greater than all else,  
and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.
- 30 The Father and I are one."

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The Gospel of the Lord."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Glory to you, O Lord.

## FIRST READING

Acts 13.14, 43-52

*I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles.*

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

Paul and Barnabas went to a town and shared God's Word in the synagogue. Many people were excited to hear about Jesus, but some got jealous and caused trouble. Paul and Barnabas kept spreading the word, and the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

The word of the Lord.

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 100.1-2, 3, 5

**R.** We are God's people.

Worship the Lord;

with singing. **R.**

Know that the Lord is God.

He made us.

We are his people. **R.**

For the Lord is good;

He is faithful to everyone. **R.**

## SECOND READING

**Revelation 7.9, 14-17**

*The Lamb will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life.*

A reading from the book of Revelation.

John saw a huge crowd of people from all over the world standing before God's throne. They had gone through tough times but were made clean by Jesus. God will protect them, and they will never be hungry or sad again.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

The word of the Lord.

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

*A period of silence is observed after the reading.*

The children stand for the Gospel. They sign themselves on the forehead, lips, and chest.

## GOSPEL

John 10.27 30

*I give my sheep eternal life.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Jesus says that His sheep (that's us!) listen to His voice, and He knows them, and they follow Him. He gives them eternal life, and no one can take them away from Him or His Father because Jesus and the Father are one.

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims, "The Gospel of the Lord."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Children:** Glory to you, O Lord.

## Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

### Tips for Asking Questions:

- Use simple language.
- Give children time to think and answer.
- Be encouraging and positive.
- Don't be afraid to rephrase the question if they don't understand.
- Listen carefully to their answers and affirm their efforts.
- Relate the questions to their everyday experiences.
- Make it a conversation, not an interrogation!

### What did you hear? *(Allow children to respond)*

Today is a special Sunday. It's called Good Shepherd Sunday! Can you say that with me? Good Shepherd Sunday! That's because today we talk about Jesus as our Good Shepherd.

### What Does a Shepherd Do?

They lead the sheep to green grass to eat, and to water to drink. They protect the sheep from wolves and other dangers. And most importantly, a good shepherd knows all of his sheep. He even gives them names!

### Who is the Good Shepherd?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows each and every one of us. He knows your name, what you're good at, and when you're sad or happy. And He loves you very, very much! Jesus says that His sheep listen to His voice, and He knows them, and they follow Him. Jesus wants us to listen to Him so He can lead us to Heaven and keep us safe. Jesus wants to take care of us and lead us to Heaven.

In our first reading today, we heard about Paul and Barnabas. They were telling people all about Jesus. Some people were happy to hear the good news, but others got angry and didn't want to listen. But Paul and Barnabas didn't give up! They kept sharing the good news about Jesus with everyone they could.

### What should we do if people don't want to listen to us when we talk about Jesus? *(Keep trying, but don't force them)*

We sang a Psalm, which is like a song to God. The Psalm told us to be happy and shout joyfully to God because He made us! We are like His sheep, and He takes care of us. So, we should always thank God for everything He gives us.

**How can we listen to Jesus?** We can listen to Him when we pray, read the Bible, listen to Him when our parents and teachers tell us what's right and wrong, and listen to Him when we are kind and loving to others. When we listen to and follow Jesus, we are like good sheep, and Jesus will always take care of us.

**What is one thing you learned today about Jesus, the Good Shepherd?**

**What is one thing you can do this week to listen to Jesus' voice and follow Him better?**

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

## The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who gave his life for us?

All: I believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: I believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.



## Prayer of the Faithful

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

**The leader says:**

**Let us pray to Jesus, our Good Shepherd, who loves us and cares for us always. We will say, "Lord, hear our prayer." R: Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Assistant:**

**That the Church, like a good shepherd, may always guide and protect all people, especially those who are lost or in need. Let us pray to the Lord. R:**

**Assistant:**

**That our Pope, bishops, priests and deacons may be good shepherds, leading us closer to Jesus with love and kindness. Let us pray to the Lord. R:**

**Assistant:**

**That all children may know Jesus as their Good Shepherd and feel His love and protection. Let us pray to the Lord. R:**

**Assistant:**

**That our families may be filled with love and kindness, helping each other to follow Jesus' way. Let us pray to the Lord. R:**

**Assistant:**

**That Jesus, our Good Shepherd, may comfort those who are sad or lonely and bring them hope and joy. Let us pray to the Lord. R:**

**The Leader says:**

**Good Shepherd, Jesus, you love us and care for us always. Hear our prayers and help us to follow you with all our hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord..**

**Leader:** Let's finish by making the Sign of the Cross together.

**All:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

**Return to the church.**

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary for Sundays and Solemnities, CCCB, Ottawa, ON.  
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