



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Good Shepherd Sunday



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Overview

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is also known as Good Shepherd Sunday. The readings invite us to enter into one of the most touching images of Christ as Jesus the Good Shepherd. This Sunday focuses on both the identity of Christ and the nature of discipleship within the Church.

The image of a shepherd is rooted in the Old Testament, where God is portrayed as the shepherd of Israel. In John's Gospel, Jesus not only fulfills this role but also makes it more real, for He is not merely a guide but the gate through which salvation comes. This dual image emphasizes mediation—Christ is both the one who leads and the very means by which we enter into divine life. His voice is central; the sheep "know his voice," pointing to a relational, not merely intellectual, knowledge of God. Faith, then, is attunement to Christ's voice amid competing voices.

This Sunday calls Children's Liturgy Leaders to foster a personal relationship with Christ marked by trust, recognition, and response. The Good Shepherd knows each sheep individually, which affirms human dignity and the personal nature of salvation. The goal is not simply the delivery of content but of accompaniment: helping children recognize Christ's voice in prayer and daily life.

The passage also introduces a contrast: the Good Shepherd versus thieves and strangers. Leaders may find an opportunity to help children differentiate false "voices." Jesus' mission is clear: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." The Christian life is not about just living superficially, but about living a life that flourishes with grace.

Finally, Good Shepherd Sunday has a vocational dimension. It is traditionally associated with prayer for vocations, reminding the Church that Christ continues His shepherding through ordained ministry and all forms of lay ministry. Children's Liturgy Leaders participate in this shepherding mission by forming others to listen, follow, and ultimately become witnesses to the Good Shepherd in the world. It is a wonderful week to invite children to pray for bishops, priests, deacons, and all who serve in Church ministry.

Key Messages for Children

1. Jesus knows them by Name.
2. Listen for Jesus' voice.
3. Jesus is the gate.
4. Children can be like shepherds.

Key Messages for Leaders

- † Help children experience that Jesus knows them and loves them.
- † Encourage children to differentiate between Jesus' voice and other voices.
- † Connect belonging to the Church.
- † Encourage prayers for vocations.

Leader's Personal Reflection Questions

- When do I most clearly recognize the voice of Jesus in my own life?
- How do I actively invite children to follow Jesus during the week?

Leader Takeaway

Children's Liturgy of the Word is an encounter with the Good Shepherd Himself.

Background

Acts 2.14a, 36b-41 Peter preaches boldly that the crucified Jesus is now Lord and Messiah, and his words pierce the hearts of the listeners. The crowd asks what to do, and Peter answers with a simple pattern still central to Christian life: repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. The surprising result is not condemnation but a great gathering of new believers, showing how grace turns guilt into a new beginning.

Psalms 23 presents God as a shepherd who provides, guides, protects, and restores. Even when the path goes through darkness, the psalmist trusts that God remains near with comfort and strength. For ordinary believers, it is a prayer of calm confidence: God does not merely watch from afar; he walks with his people.

1 Peter 2:20-25 says that suffering has meaning when it is joined to Christ's own endurance. Jesus did not answer insult with insult, but bore suffering faithfully, becoming both example and healer. The final image is powerful: we were lost like sheep, but now we have returned to the shepherd who watches over our souls.

John 10:1-10 Jesus describes himself as the shepherd whose voice the sheep recognize and follow. He contrasts himself with false leaders who exploit people rather than care for them. Then he deepens the image by saying, "I am the gate," meaning that true safety, freedom, and life are found by coming through him. Jesus is both the Shepherd and the Gate. The climax is clear and memorable: Jesus came so that people may have life, and have it abundantly.

These readings say that salvation is not mainly about rules or fear, but about hearing Christ's voice, returning to him, and receiving the fullness of life he gives. Christian life begins by hearing the Shepherd's voice. The Church helps form us to recognize His voice amid competing voices. Discipleship is not passive—it requires conversion, trust and perseverance.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, calls each person by name, leads them through suffering into life, and invites a response of trust that brings abundant life in Him.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

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

Dear children, today is called Good Shepherd Sunday. You will hear in the Gospel that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus knows your name. Go with your leaders and listen to Jesus speaking to you.

Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the CLoW room, 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 offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Let's quiet our hearts and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Almighty God, give us new strength from the courage of Christ our shepherd and lead us to join the saints in heaven.

Amen.

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

READINGS

FIRST READING

Acts 2.14a, 36b-41

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

When the days of Pentecost had come, Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd. "Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now, when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other Apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day were added about three thousand souls.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalms 23.1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul. **R.**

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me. **R.**

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. **R.**

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. **R.**

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter.

Beloved:

If you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the Cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

Acts 2.14a, 36b-41

Saint Peter stood up and spoke to the people. He said to listen. Peter told them the important truth about Jesus: God has made Jesus both "Lord" and "Messiah." This is the same Jesus they crucified.

When the people heard this, they felt very sad inside and asked, "What should we do?"

Peter answered with God's plan: "Repent" (that means: turn back to God and change your heart and life). Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that sins can be forgiven. After that, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter also said this wasn't only for those people that day: God's promise is for you, your children, and everyone far away—everyone God calls.

And then something wonderful happened: about three thousand people welcomed his message and were baptized.

+ **What does it mean to repent?** (Try to name a way you can turn back to God.)

+ **Who is included in God's promise?** (Is it only for one group of people?)

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 23.1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. The Lord is my shepherd.

The Lord is my shepherd.
He makes me rest in safe places,
and he leads me beside quiet water. R.

Even when I walk through a dark valley,
I will not be afraid, because God is with me.
God's love helps me and comforts me. R.

Goodness and mercy will follow me every day,
and I will live in the house of the Lord forever. R.

Sometimes, bad things happen when we don't think that they should. In God's Kingdom, if you keep living like Jesus wants you to, even when people are mean to you for doing what's right, God is pleased with you.

God's goal for you is not just to get through difficult times—it's to become like Jesus. Jesus suffered too, and He showed us how to live so that we can follow His example.

Jesus never did wrong. He didn't lie, and when people hurt Him, He didn't hurt them back. He didn't threaten anyone. Instead, He trusted God, who judges fairly.

Jesus took our sins and carried them on the cross. Because of what He did, we can be made well inside—so we can live in the right way.

And here's an important picture: we used to be like sheep that wander away. But now we have come back to Jesus, who is like a shepherd who protects us and cares for our souls.

When someone is mean to you for doing the right thing, what can you do instead of getting angry back?

What does it mean that Jesus is like a shepherd?

How can you follow Jesus this week?

Jesus tells a story to help us understand Him. He says that a real shepherd comes in through the gate, but someone who tries to get in by another way is trying to trick and harm the sheep.

Then Jesus describes what sheep do: the gatekeeper opens the gate, and the sheep hear the shepherd's voice. The shepherd even calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. Because the sheep know his voice, they follow him—but they won't follow a stranger, because they don't recognize that voice.

How can you tell the difference between the shepherd's voice and a stranger's voice?

Jesus wants everyone to understand the meaning, so He says something very clear: "I am the gate for the sheep." Anyone who enters through Him will be safe and will find pasture. (good food and care.)

Jesus also explains the danger: a thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. But Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." That means He doesn't come to take life away—He comes to give real, happy, full life.

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:

What did you hear? Allow children to respond.

We hear about someone very special — a shepherd.

Does anyone know what a shepherd does?

Today, we learn that Jesus is like a shepherd for us.

Jesus said, "I am like a shepherd. My sheep know my voice. When I call them, they follow me because they trust me. I take care of them and keep them safe. Let's imagine something...

If your mom or dad called your name in a big crowd, **would you know their voice?**

Of course you would! **Why?** Because you know them and they love you.

Jesus says: "My sheep know my voice."

How do we hear Jesus' voice today? Prayer, Scripture, parents, teachers, Church.

Jesus also says He is like a gate. A gate keeps things safe, right? It lets the good in and keeps danger out.

What are some good things Jesus wants to let into your life? Love, kindness, peace, and forgiveness.

Sometimes we feel confused, sad, or unsure what to do. That's like being a lost sheep. But listen to this: Jesus always comes looking for us and brings us back.

What can you do when you feel lost or worried? Pray, talk to God, remember Jesus is with you.

Simple Message to Remember

- † Jesus knows you by name.
- † Jesus loves you.
- † Jesus will always guide you.

Let's try something! Everyone, close your eyes. Now, I will say your name softly... The leader gently says a few names. That's what Jesus does — He calls each of us personally.

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

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

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

The leader says:

Jesus is our Good Shepherd who loves us, calls each of us by name, and brings our prayers to God. Our response is: R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church, that she may listen to the voice of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and guide all people with love and care. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For the Pope, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, that they may be good shepherds, leading God's people with kindness, courage, and faith. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For those who feel lost or afraid, that they may hear Jesus' voice and know that He is always with them, guiding them and loving them. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For children and families, that we may care for one another like the Good Shepherd, showing love, patience, and forgiveness. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For ourselves, that we may listen to Jesus' voice each day and follow Him with trust and joy. We pray to the Lord. R:

The Leader says:

Loving God, you sent us Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Hear the prayers we bring before you and help us always follow His voice. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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Bulletin: TheKidsBulletin.com – **Goodwill donation suggested**

John 10:1-10 handout provided by thewordthisweek.net

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

John 10:1-10

1. How do the sheep know their shepherd?



- A. By his smell.
- B. By his clothes.
- C. By his voice.

5. What do the sheep do when they hear a stranger's voice?

- A. Listen quietly.
- B. Run away.
- C. Follow him.



2. Where does the shepherd walk for his sheep to follow?

- A. Beside them.
- B. In front of them.
- C. Behind them.



6. How do thieves and robbers get into the sheep pen?

- A. Through the gate.
- B. Under the fence.
- C. Climbing over the fence.



3. What does Jesus say he is for the sheep?

- A. A strong wall.
- B. The only gate.
- C. A big shepherd dog.



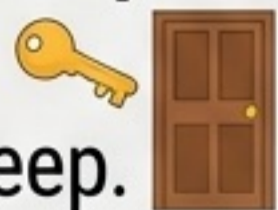
7. A thief comes only to...

- A. Help and share.
- B. Rob, kill, and destroy.
- C. Feed the sheep.



4. Who does the gatekeeper open the gate for?

- A. Only the sheep.
- B. The shepherd.
- C. Strangers.



8. Jesus came so everyone would have...

- A. A full life.
- B. Shiny toys.
- C. Lots of money.



The Good Shepherd



The readings in today's Mass talk about Jesus the Good Shepherd. In Jesus' time, and still in some parts of the world today, there would be flocks of sheep grazing

in the pastures. The shepherds were the people who looked after the flocks and made sure none of the sheep got lost or hurt or attacked by wild animals.

The Church is the flock of Jesus, and He is the Good Shepherd. He guides the people in the Church so that their souls will not be hungry- He gives us grace, just like a shepherd makes sure his sheep have lots of grass to eat!

Like the shepherd protects the sheep from danger, Our Lord also protects us from harm. In the "Our Father" we ask God to deliver us from evil. When our souls are hurt by sin, the Good Shepherd heals us with forgiveness in Confession.



Answer to puzzle on front page:
I am the gate.
Answer to Fill-in-the-blanks:
know his voice.

The Kids' Bulletin

Fourth Sunday of Easter

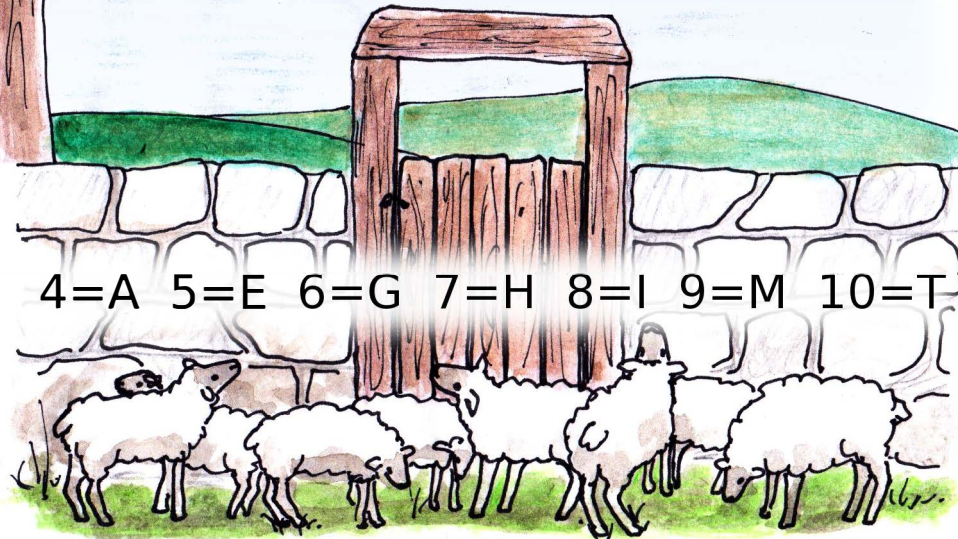


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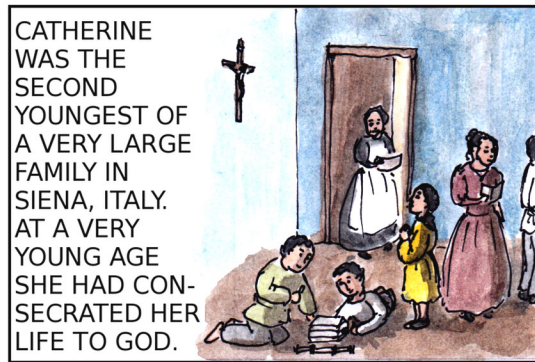
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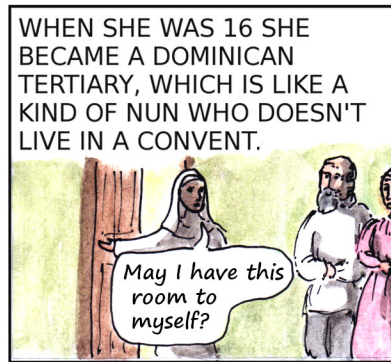
What did Jesus say about the sheepfold?
Figure out the math questions
and then fill in the blanks
with the letters the numbers represent.

Saint Catherine of Siena

April 29



CATHERINE WAS THE SECOND YOUNGEST OF A VERY LARGE FAMILY IN SIENA, ITALY. AT A VERY YOUNG AGE SHE HAD CON-SECRATED HER LIFE TO GOD.



WHEN SHE WAS 16 SHE BECAME A DOMINICAN TERTIARY, WHICH IS LIKE A KIND OF NUN WHO DOESN'T LIVE IN A CONVENT.

May I have this room to myself?



SHE RECEIVED MANY VISIONS OF JESUS AND THE SAINTS.

I want you to be my bride.



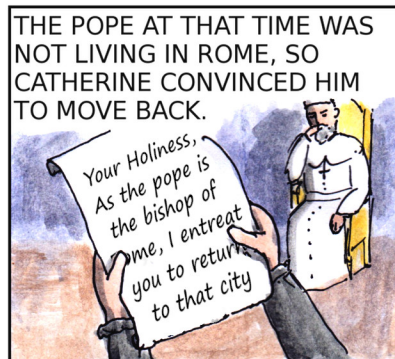
God is not pleased with this constant war.

CATHERINE BEGAN TO ADVISE PEOPLE SO THAT THERE WOULD BE PEACE IN ITALY.



SHE EVEN ADVISED THE CHURCH LEADERS.

They should be busy with God's work, not man's.



THE POPE AT THAT TIME WAS NOT LIVING IN ROME, SO CATHERINE CONVINCED HIM TO MOVE BACK.

Your Holiness, As the pope is the bishop of me, I entreat you to return to that city



Here! You shouldn't be sleeping in the cold!

THE POPE CALLED HER TO HELP HIM IN ROME, SO SHE WENT. THERE SHE ALSO CARED FOR THE SICK AND THE POOR. SHE DIED THERE AT AGE 33.

CATHERINE ALSO HAD GREAT PHYSICAL SUFFERING. OFTEN SHE LIVED ON ALMOST NO FOOD OTHER THAN HOLY COMMUNION. SHE RECEIVED THE WOUNDS OF CHRIST AND ASKED GOD TO LET HER CARRY THE SINS OF THE WORLD. WE CAN LEARN FROM HER TO PRAY FOR THE HOLY FATHER AND DEFEND HIM.

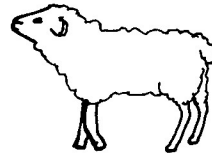
Fill-in-the-Blanks

The letters in squares fit into the spaces at the bottom.

GATEKEEPER
REALIZE
SPEECH
ENTERS

HIS
WILL
YOU
AMEN

THIEF
DRIVEN
CLIMBS
VOICE



Jesus said: "Amen, ¹²_____, I say to ⁹_____, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but ¹¹_____ over elsewhere is a ⁵_____ and a robber. But whoever ²_____ through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The _____ ¹_____ opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls ¹⁰_____ own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has _____ ⁸_____ out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his ³_____. But they will not follow a stranger; they ⁴_____ run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." Although Jesus used this figure of ⁷_____, the Pharisees did not _____ ⁶_____ what he was trying to tell them.

The sheep 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12