

Easter:

Fourth Sunday of Easter

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Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- The reading from the Acts of the Apostles follows the story of the arrest of Peter and John and includes Peter's speech to the authorities who are interrogating them.
- Peter restates the basic truth of the Resurrection: Death is conquered and life won through the death and Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.
- The authorities release Peter and John, who immediately return to preaching the Good News.

Second Reading

- The reading from the First Letter of John is another description of the relationship between God and people.
- God has made us children through and with Christ.
- Because we are God's children, then, we must be like God.

Gospel

- In the Gospel passage, Jesus describes three traits of an ideal shepherd.
- These traits also characterize Jesus' relationship to his followers.
- Jesus calls his sheep by name, and they follow wherever he leads.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Fourth Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 4:8-12—Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28, 29—The stone rejected has become the cornerstone.

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-2—God's great love for us.

Gospel: John 10:11-18—The Good Shepherd.

Invitation to prayer (30 seconds)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Have them take three deep breaths while you prompt them to relax as they breathe in God, our Father who loves us, Jesus Christ, his Son, our brother, and God's Holy Spirit who lovingly guides us. As an invitation to prayer, make the Sign of the Cross.

Listening for a word or phrase to speak to your heart (3-4 minutes)

Read the Gospel passage or the special phrase slowly and deliberately while the children are silently listening. Ask them to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they select their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

Ages 5-6: Read 1 John 3:1-2 from a children's Bible, or paraphrase it in your own words. Have children focus attention on the words "child of God" on their handout.

Ages 7-11: Read aloud the poem about God's love and ask them to listen for a word or phrase that speaks to their hearts.

Ages 12-14: Read the Scripture passage.

Loving God through his Word (3-5 minutes)

Ages 5-6: Read aloud each question and teach children the gesture to each phrase. Close by going around the group and having each child say the prayer statement.

Ages 7-8: Use the letter on each line to begin a word or phrase that says how you feel about Jesus' love for you. Explain directions to children. Write this on a board or chart paper:

J _____
E _____
S _____
U _____
S _____

Have children express how they feel about God's love for them. As they think of a word write it out for them. Have them choose a favorite and copy it on their handout.

Ages 9-11: Introduce the acrostic and explain directions to young people. Have them complete the acrostic and share their words with the group.

Ages 12-14: Guide young people in a silent meditation, using the questions on the handout. When the reflection is finished, ask if there are any questions about the reading and invite responses to the questions raised. Give time for young people to commit the first line of the reading to memory and pray it aloud.

Living the Gospel words through the week (3-5 minutes)

The handouts describe one or two ways children and young people can live this reflection on the Gospel through the week at home, school, or play. If appropriate, have them add one or two more personal choices to act on this week.