

Easter:

Fourth Sunday in Easter

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Preparation

Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- The reading from Acts describes the first missionary outreach of the early Church.
- Paul and Barnabas were sent fourth by the Holy Spirit to spread the Good News.
- When they were rejected by the Jews, Paul and Barnabas decided to bring the message to the Gentiles.

Second Reading

- Today's passage from Revelation was part of a grand vision in which all God's faithful were gathered.
- The faithful "survived the time of great distress," which probably refers to persecution of the early Church.
- God's faithful became united with Christ in his death and were sustained in life by him.

Gospel

- In the Gospel, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd.
- The passage goes on to describe the relationship between Jesus and his Father.
- John stresses the unity between Jesus and the Father.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Fourth Sunday in Easter

First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43-52—Many Jews become followers.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5—We are God's people.

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14b-17—The Lamb will lead to the springs of living water.

Gospel: John 10:27-30—The Good Shepherd.

Invitation to prayer (30 sec.)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Begin the session with the Sign of the Cross. 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.

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

Read the Gospel passage or 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 pick out their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

For Ages 5-6 and Ages 7-8: Read aloud the words "**The Good Shepherd.**" Read John 10:27-30 from a children's Bible or tell it in your own words.

For Ages 9-11 and Ages 12-14: Read aloud John 10:27-30. Ask young people to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they pick out their word or phrase. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

Loving God through his word (3-5 min.)

For Ages 5-6: Explain what shepherds do. **They watch sheep, and they care for them. They know them, and they go after them if they are lost.** Read aloud each line on the handout and have children repeat after you. Have each child write his or her name on one of the sheep in the illustration. Help those who need help. Close with the prayer. You may wish to use gestures with the Alleluia or sing it.

For Ages 7-8: Explain what shepherds do. **They watch sheep, and they care for them. They know them, and they go after them if they are lost.** Have a conversation with the children using each statement on the handout. Allow children to fill in the blanks in the appropriate place. Help where needed. Close with the prayer.

For ages 9-11: Ask young people to share their word or phrase. Play quiet music in the background and direct young people to meditate on the questions from the handout. After a few minutes, ask them to share their responses to each of the questions in the meditation. Close with the prayer.

For ages 12-14: Ask young people to share their word or phrase. Have young people take a few minutes to reflect on the questions and have them share their responses in the large group. Spend some time discussing what made the young people uncomfortable. Ask their reasons for the contemporary images they chose. Close with the prayer.

Living the Gospel words through the week (3-5 min.)

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.