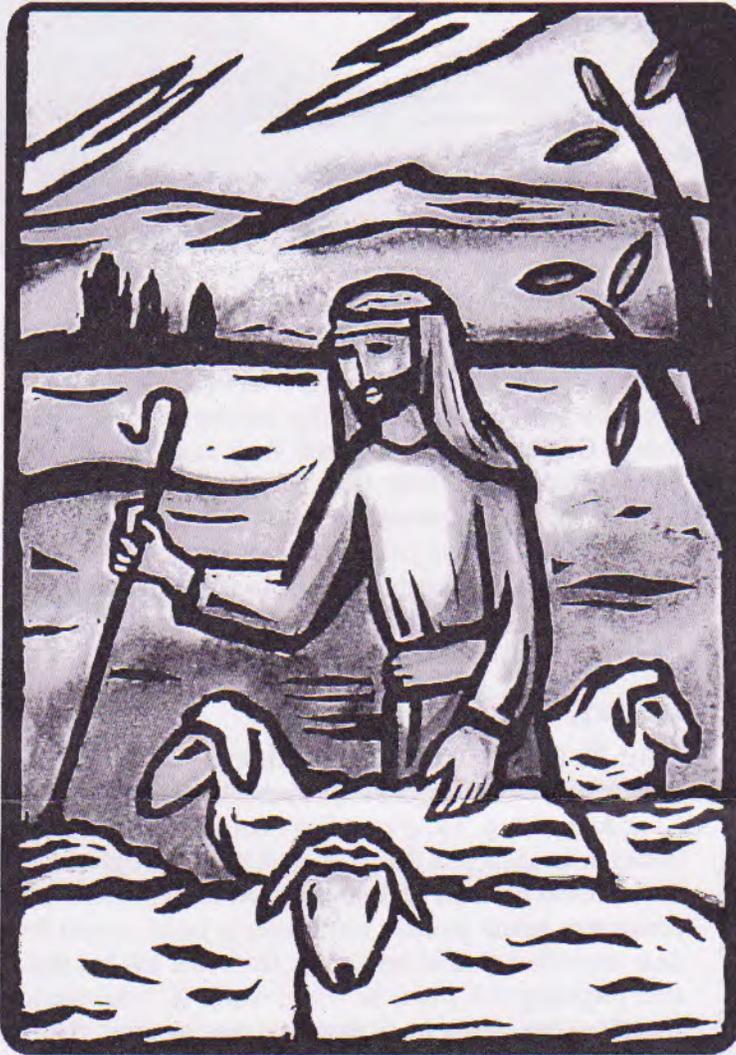


Fourth Sunday of Easter



A Prayer for Leadership

Gracious God,
you who sent Jesus
to shepherd your people,
help our leaders to guide us
with courage and imagination.
When we are in leadership roles,
give us the strength of the
Good Shepherd.

Especially in spring,
help us appreciate the
beauties of green pastures,
flowing water, tiny leaves,
and budding branches.

We ask this through our Lord
Jesus Christ,

your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sunday, April 29, 2012 Job versus Vocation

Acts 4:8–12; Psalm 118:1, 8–9, 21–23, 26, 28, 29 (22); 1 John 3:1–2; John 10:11–18. Any romantic ideals of shepherding need a reality check. In Jesus' day, it was smelly, hard work, with low pay and low status. Danger often demanded that shepherds put their lives on the line. A preying wolf, flood, or fire were only a few obstacles a shepherd might face.

That's why Jesus distinguishes between the hired hand and the truly dedicated shepherd. We know the difference between a job and a vocation. A job ends promptly at 5:00 PM, when an employee walks out the door, untroubled by any thought of work until 8:00 AM the next morning. A vocation, on the other hand, permeates one's life. The truly dedicated

person thinks about it even away from the workplace, always creating better ways to do things. It becomes the perfect channel for one's abilities, the outlet for one's passions, the source and focus of one's energies.

If we humans were as helpless and dependent as sheep, we'd be deeply grateful for a shepherd with a vocation, who lived up to the ideal of Psalm 23. If oppressed, we'd long for a stalwart protector. Knowing our own limitations, we'd look to the Good Shepherd, on whom we could rely. Of course we are not sheep, yet in many ways we are still dependent; we need our Shepherd, who is also our model when we are responsible for others.



This Week at Home

Monday, April 30

Saint Pius V

Today's Readings: Acts 11:1–18; Psalm 42:2–3; 43:3, 4 (Alleluia); John 10:1–10. This Pope, whose optional memorial may be celebrated today, maintained an austere Dominican life, with much prayer, penance, and charity. He served the poor and sick, banned bullfighting, and promulgated *The Roman Missal* of 1570. When the Ottoman Turks threatened invasion of Europe, he gathered a group of European armies to defeat them, instituting the memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary in thanksgiving for the victory.

Tuesday, May 1

Saint Joseph the Worker

Today's Readings: Acts 11:19–26; Psalm 87:1b–3, 4–5, 6–7 (117:1a); John 10:22–30, or for the optional memorial: Genesis 1:26–2:3 or Colossians 3:14–15, 17, 23–24; Psalm 90:2, 3–4, 12–13, 14 and 16; Matthew 13:54–58. As we celebrate Saint Joseph the Worker, we hear in Matthew people from Nazareth trying to discredit Jesus, asking, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (13:55). They hint that Joseph’s work was lowly, but God chose Joseph for his courage, skill, and grace. He took the pregnant Mary as his wife and provided lovingly for his adopted son. Joseph inspires all people who work with their hands and shine with their souls.

Wednesday, May 2

Saint Athanasius

Today's Readings: Acts 12:24–13:5a; Psalm 67:2–3, 5, 6, and 8 (4); John 12:44–50. Athanasius (296–373), whose memorial we celebrate today, was probably born in Alexandria, Egypt, and was called the Father of Orthodoxy. His contemporaries described his keen sense of humor and courage in debate. He attended the Council of Nicaea as a theological advisor. When debates over the Arian heresy disrupted the Church, Athanasius defended Christ’s divinity tirelessly, even though he was exiled by enemies five times.

Thursday, May 3

Feast of Saint Philip and Saint James

Today's Readings: 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; Psalm 19:2–3, 4–5 (5); John 14:6–14. We hear Philip and James speaking in today's Gospel. Philip says, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied” (14:8). Jesus must have felt exasperated with the lack of understanding: “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?” (14:9). Despite their lack of insight at that moment, Philip and James become canonized saints. Jesus worked with limited human beings, and God’s power flowed through them.

Friday, May 4

The Bridegroom’s Promise

Today's Readings: Acts 13:26–33; Psalm 2:6–7, 8–9, 10–11ab (7bc); John 14:1–6. Today's reading from John is a good one to memorize and repeat during difficult times. It originates in the betrothal customs of Jesus’ day. After engagement, a young man would promise his fiancée to build a room for them onto the house of his family. He would tell her that, after preparing this place, he would return to “take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also” (14:3). Jesus wants the same kind of intimacy with us.

Saturday, May 5

God with a Human Face and Heart

Today's Readings: Acts 13:44–52; Psalm 98:1, 2–3ab, 3cd–4; John 14:7–14. In today's Gospel passage, Jesus explains that he is, in effect, God’s human face. But Jesus looked so much like an ordinary human being that Philip must have been puzzled, thinking that he had not yet revealed the Father. When Jesus encourages us to “ask [him] for anything,” he surely doesn’t mean oceanfront property or Lexus convertibles. He wants us to ask—and will give—what is most true to our deepest selves: compassion, wisdom, strength, generosity. In union with him, weak human beings then become the doers of extraordinary deeds.



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 Keeping the Seasons

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