

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year C
11 May 2025
John 10:27-30

Catechist Background

In each year, the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Easter focuses on Jesus as the 'Good Shepherd.' This year's reading is rather short, but it nonetheless contains some powerful messages and imagery.

First century Palestinian shepherding practice is not as intimately familiar to us today as it was to Jesus' first listeners. Shepherds were not genteel members of society – in fact, their close living with sheep often meant they were smelly and as a result, were not popular! However, the safety of the sheep, (an important source of food and wool for people), was dependent on shepherds doing their job well. Shepherds faced many dangers in looking after the sheep, and ran great risks defending them from predators such as wolves, birds of prey and people. Unlike most modern European shepherds, those in Jesus' day led their flocks from the front, rather than chasing them from the back. Then, as now, many of a shepherd's duties are 'earthy' (such as removing dried faeces from the wool, attending to wounded or ill sheep, lambing, etc.). Being a shepherd was a tough but worthy life.

Setting the Scene

For the activity below, you will need

- a stick puppet of a sheep for each child. You could make them by attaching a paper or card sheep-shape to a lolly stick or pencil. Sheep are easy to draw; draw a cloud and put legs and a head on it! Otherwise, children's colouring books will often have a good sheep to use as a template, or download from the internet.
- The children will need materials to decorate the sheep with. They could use cotton wool and glue, or colouring pens, pencils or crayons. *Do remember, sheep are not always white!*
- You will also need one puppet to be 'the Father' and one to be the 'Good Shepherd.'

We Say Sorry

Leader: You come for us when we have strayed, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Leader: You draw us to yourself, Christ have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Leader: You know each one of us, Lord have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Dear God, help us to understand that Jesus, your Son, is our Good Shepherd, and just like a sheep is safe when with a shepherd, so we are safe when we follow Jesus. Amen.

Gospel Intro

It may be helpful, particularly for children who have little agricultural background, to explain what a shepherd does in order to look after sheep.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel John 10:27-30

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What do shepherds do?
 - How do they care for their sheep?
- In what ways is Jesus like a shepherd for us?
- We can think of ourselves as like sheep and Jesus as our shepherd.
 - Sometimes we act like good sheep. Can you give an example of that?
 - Sometimes we act like naughty sheep. Can you give an example of that?
- What does a good shepherd do when the sheep are in trouble?
 - What does Jesus do for us?

Response

- Give each child a sheep puppet to decorate; [Sheep don't have to be white - spotted sheep and stripy sheep are fine too]
- Older children might like to decorate the sheep with symbols of their interests or hobbies or personal characteristics to remind them that we are like the sheep in this story.
- Encourage the children to act out a brief puppet show of The Father giving the sheep to the Shepherd, and the Shepherd leading them.
- If you have room, they could act out the sheep being led physically around the space that you use.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting them to reply, 'I do, Alleluia, Alleluia!' [*Explain that we say 'Alleluia' – the happiest word – because it is Easter and Jesus has come back to life.*]

- Do you believe in God the Father, who gives us to Jesus' care?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who looks after us and gave his life for us?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to follow the Good Shepherd?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'We know Jesus leads us in our hearts, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for all those who task it is to tell others about Jesus, may they always lead people to Jesus and not away from him. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for world leaders, that they will look after everyone in their countries. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people who are far away from home. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anybody in our parish community who is feeling sad or lost inside. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, we know we are sometimes wander away from where we should go. Help keep us on the safe path of following Jesus. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**