

# REFLECTIONS ON THE EUCHARISTIC READINGS FOR VOCATIONS SUNDAY

## THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER | YEAR A

### GENESIS 7

The story of Noah and the great flood is one of obedience to the will of God, resilience and faithfulness in the face of challenge and uncertainty. God provided Noah with a place of refuge and strength to withstand the flood. Noah implicitly trusted the promises of God and he is rewarded for his fidelity.

Or

### ACTS 2: 42-47

The passage follows Peter's address to the crowd after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It gives a snapshot of the life and practices of the infant church community and serves as a model for Christian discipleship today. The daily lives of the disciples were rooted in a discipline of prayer, pastoral care for those in need, study and fellowship.

### PSALM 23

Psalms 23 is probably the most familiar of all the psalms. It speaks of God as the divine shepherd who provides, guards and guides the souls in his care. He is a source of consolation, reassurance and strength.

### I PETER 2: 19-25

In this passage, the author addresses Christian slaves and encourages them to unite their suffering with Christ, making several references to the Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53. Endurance and fidelity in the face of unjust suffering is the central message and he reminds them that Jesus suffered unjustly. If they can still trust and love God despite their time of trial, then they will find favour in his eyes.

Or

### ACTS 2: 42-47

[See above]

### JOHN 10: 1-10

The gospel readings allocated to the fourth Sunday of Easter in the three-year cycle are all sections of chapter 10 of the gospel according to John, where Jesus is depicted as the Good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. In the particular verses appointed

for year A, Jesus describes how the sheep of his flock know his voice and follow him, in the same way that the sheep in a particular flock will know the voice of their own Shepherd and will not follow the voice of strangers. In biblical times, flocks of sheep would mix with other flocks in sheepfolds with a gate and a gatekeeper, particularly at night. Thieves would attempt to steal sheep by accessing the sheepfold by other ways, because the gate was monitored. In likening the relationship between Jesus and his followers to that of the relationship between shepherd and sheep, it speaks of the way in which he protects and cares for us, and also the level of intimacy and trust we ought to have with him to recognize his presence and his call in our lives. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus distinguishes himself from false shepherds. In this allegory, Jesus also refers to himself as 'the gate' through which we find salvation and abundant life. As the gate, he provides a place of security and safety for his flock.

### CONNECTING THE SCRIPTURES TO VOCATION SUNDAY

Shepherd imagery connects our readings today and shepherds are concerned with the safety and wellbeing of the sheep in their care. In our preaching we can make connections between the readings and those called to lead and exercise pastoral ministries within the church, particularly those called to ordained ministries. Christ provides the principal pattern of ministry for those who are called to lead his flock and protect them from spiritual harm. As the sheep of his flock, all the baptized are required to faithfully follow the Good Shepherd wherever he leads and we are tasked with welcoming the lost among us, those whom he seeks out. The church is the sheepfold, it should be a place where people feel safe and where all are loved and cherished, as Christ loves and cherishes us. When he calls us, we must listen. The account from the book of Acts provides us with a model for authentic Christian community, centered on worship and devoted to good works and acts of charity. Trust is another key theme in our readings today concerning our relationship with God; we must trust as Noah did that God has a plan for us too. He wants us to flourish and he will reward us for our faithfulness.

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