

REFLECTIONS ON THE EUCHARISTIC READINGS FOR VOCATIONS SUNDAY

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER | YEAR B

GENESIS 7: 1-5, 11-18; 8: 6-18; 9: 8-13

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. He implicitly trusted the promises of God and he is rewarded for his fidelity when God established a covenant with Noah and his descendants.

Or

ACTS 4. 5-12

This passage follows the healing of the crippled man and Peter explains to the religious authorities the power behind the miracle, the crucified risen Christ. We learn how the Holy Spirit gives Peter the ability to fulfil his apostolic vocation, enabling him to speak with authority and conviction the salvation found in Jesus, while he is being challenged and interrogated.

PSALM 23

Psalm 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 JOHN 3: 16-24

Jesus showed us how to love one another and demonstrated his love for us when he laid down his life; therefore, love is our primary vocation and characterises the Christian life. This passage reminds us that love leads to action, especially when we see a brother or sister in need. We are also reminded that we show our love for God by keeping his commandments.

Or

ACTS 4. 5-12

[See above]

JOHN 10. 11-18

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 these particular verses of the Good Shepherd discourse appointed for year B, Jesus speaks of himself as the 'Good Shepherd' who protects and pastorally cares for his flock, unlike the hired hand. The passage describes the intimacy of Jesus' relationship with his own sheep, which he likens to the intimacy he enjoys with his Father. Jesus expresses his desire for those who are not in his fold to follow him and listen to his voice, often interpreted as a reference to those beyond to land of Israel, he intends to bring together Jew and Gentile into one flock with one shepherd. He makes known that he will freely lay down his life for his sheep and this sacrificial act will testify to the greatness of his love.

CONNECTING THE SCRIPTURES TO VOCATION SUNDAY

In the readings today we have examples of God's fidelity to Noah and Peter, whom he equips with all they need to fulfil their respective vocations and face the challenges they experience; they likewise demonstrate great faith and trust in him. Just like the divine Shepherd of Israel referred to in the psalm and David the shepherd king and psalmist, Jesus is one who leads and protects those entrusted to his care and whom he calls into his fold. Those who preach may wish to encourage the faithful to consider how God has equipped them to live out their baptismal vocation and fulfil their ministries. In addition, the preacher may wish to challenge the congregation to consider whether God may be calling them to do new things and trust him, as Noah and Peter did. The care of the Good Shepherd for his flock continues through the ministry of his Church, which reaches out in love to those who are not in his fold, especially the least and the lost. We each have a part to play in helping others to recognise the Good Shepherd, to listen to his voice and find their way into his fold, a place of safety in a world where the 'wolves' of confusion, evil and suffering threaten to 'snatch' and 'scatter' them. The sheep of the fold are encouraged in I John 3 to make known the sacrificial love of Jesus through their own lives of love, service and fidelity, setting an example that others might follow.

