

First reading Acts 4:8-12**The name of Jesus Christ is the only name in which we can be saved**

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter said: 'Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he was healed, then I am glad to tell you all, and would indeed be glad to tell the whole people of Israel, that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man is able to stand up perfectly healthy, here in your presence, today. This is the stone rejected by you the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone. For of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

Responsorial Psalm 117(118): 1,8-9,21-23,26,28-29**The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone.**

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good,
for his love has no end.
It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in men;
it is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes.

I will thank you for you have answered
and you are my saviour.
The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.
This is the work of the Lord,
a marvel in our eyes.

Blessed in the name of the Lord
is he who comes.
We bless you from the house of the Lord;
You are my God, I thank you.
My God, I praise you.
Give thanks to the Lord for he is good;
for his love has no end.

Second reading 1 John 3:1-2**We shall be like God because we shall see him as he really is**

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us,
by letting us be called God's children; and that is what
we are.
Because the world refused to acknowledge him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.
My dear people, we are already the children of God
but what we are to be in the future has not yet been
revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall
be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

Gospel Acclamation Jn10:14

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good shepherd, says the
Lord; I know my own sheep and my own know me.
Alleluia!

Gospel John 10:11-18**The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep**

Jesus said: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd
is one who lays down his life for his sheep.
The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the
sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and
runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the
wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is
only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.
'I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own
know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the
Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.
And there are other sheep I have that are not of this
fold, and these I have to lead as well.
They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only
one flock, and one shepherd.
'The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in
order to take it up again.
No one takes it from me;
I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my
power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up
again; and this is the command I have been given by my
Father.'

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Feast Days this Week**Tuesday 23rd April: St George****Wednesday 24th April: St Fidelis of Sigmaringen****Thursday 25th April: St Mark****The Cycle of Prayer****Vocations:** Especially on World Day of Prayer for
Vocations — 4th Sunday of Easter**Background**

The World Day of Prayer for Vocations is held each year
on the Fourth Sunday of Easter. In the Gospel of John
read on this Sunday, in each of the three years, Jesus
speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd. The Good
Shepherd who has come so that people may have life to
the full, the one who lays down his life for his sheep, the
one who knows his sheep — they recognise his voice.
There may be a collection.

Prayer*Father,*

*in your plan for our salvation
you provide shepherds for your people.
Fill your Church with the spirit
of courage and love.
Raise up worthy ministers
of your altars
and ardent but gentle servants
of the gospel. Roman Missal*

In the Catholic tradition, a Homily, interprets the readings, shining a light on the present and asking each one of us what we must change in our lives, from today. The challenge is not so much about recounting the history or retelling the story, but living the gospel.

A very personal relationship

When people go to Rome on pilgrimage, they usually try to include a visit to the Catacombs, the earliest Christian cemeteries in existence. The earliest Christian art is there in the catacombs, in images are very simple and unadorned compared to the art that would emerge in later centuries. Yet these pictures are very striking just because of their simplicity and directness. One of the images of Jesus most found in the catacombs is that of the Good Shepherd. One is in the Catacomb of San Callistus, showing a young beardless man with a sheep draped around his shoulders and holding a bucket of water in his right hand. Clearly the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd that we find in today's gospel spoke to Christians from the earliest days of the church.

The shepherd image in the catacombs appealed to Christians from the start, because it conveys the personal nature of the relationship between Jesus and his followers; it portrays the close personal care that the shepherd has for the sheep. The shepherd has gone looking for the one sheep that was wandered off and having found it, he takes it home to the flock upon his shoulders. There is a bond between the shepherd and this one sheep. That is what Jesus conveys in today's gospel. He declares that he knows his own and his own know him, just as the Father knows him and he knows the Father. It is an extraordinary statement to make. Jesus is saying that the very personal relationship he has with his heavenly Father is the model for the equally personal relationship he has with each one of us. Jesus knows us as intimately as the Father knows him, and he wants us to know him as intimately as he knows the Father. There is a great deal to ponder there. When it comes to the Lord we are not just one of a crowd, lost in a sea of faces. In a way that we will never fully understand, the Lord knows each one of us by name. He relates to us in a personal way and he invites us to relate to him in a personal way. He wishes to enter into a personal relationship with each one of us. I am often struck by a line in Saint Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, where he says, 'I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me'. We can each make our own those words of Saint Paul. When Jesus says in today's gospel that, as the good shepherd, 'I lay down my life for my sheep', he is saying that he lays down his life for each one of us individually.

The Lord who knows us by name, who gave himself in love for each one of us, also calls us by name. Today is Vocations Sunday. The Lord has a calling that is personal to each one of us. He calls us in our uniqueness with our very particular temperament, our unique identity, the background that is specific to each one of us. No one of us is like anyone else. Parents know how distinct and unique each of their children is. They will all have been given the same love; they grow up in basically the same environment. Yet, from a very early age, their uniqueness becomes very evident. The family is a microcosm of the church as a whole. From the time of our baptism, we are each called to be the Lord's disciples, to follow the good Shepherd. However, the way we do that will be unique to each one of us. The particular way in which the Lord works through us is unique to each one of us. I can do something for the Lord that only I can do. Each person in this church can do something for the Lord that only he or she can do. Each one of us has a unique contribution to make to the work of the Lord in the world, to the life of the church, and that contribution is just as vital as anyone else's contribution. We each have a unique vocation and each vocation is equally significant. Each one of us is vitally important to the Lord. When we each respond to our unique vocation, we give a lift to everyone else. When any one of us fails to respond to that vocation, we are all a little bit impoverished.

The first reading talks about the stone that was rejected by the builders becoming the keystone of the building. There is a clear reference there to Jesus himself, the rejected one. We can all feel at times like the rejected stone, for whatever reason. Yet, we are never rejected in the Lord's eyes. He continues to call us in the way that is unique to us. He sees us as the keystone for some aspect of his work. He recognises the potential for good that is within us all. On this Vocations Sunday we commit ourselves anew to hearing and responding to the call of the good shepherd.