Spirituality
Scripture for Life



(Unsplash/Remi Clinton)



by Sr. Mary M. McGlone

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

April 13, 2026

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Today we hear that Peter's first Pentecost sermon left people "cut to the heart." Luke's record of that homily is about 625 words long, as short as it was effective. (Don't we wish there were more homilies like that!) In his enthusiasm, and bursting with the energy and love of Christ's Spirit, Peter explained who Jesus was and what he meant for them.

Of course, Luke exaggerated a bit. Three thousand baptisms is a fantastic number — 272 each for 11 disciples, not to mention the water needed — but the point is that something fantastic was happening.

This scene stirred up echoes of Israel's history. Moses once read the entire law to the people, and they enthusiastically promised to do all God asked (Exodus 24:3). Another time, Ezra read to the people for a full morning and got the same sort of response (Nehemiah 8:1-6).

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2026

Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Psalm 23
1 Peter 2:20b-25
John 10:1-10

What caught Peter's audience? Obviously, the disciples' enthusiasm and seemingly miraculous ability to communicate astonished them. Much more than that, Peter offered a new interpretation of the horrific turn of events around Jesus' death. The Romans specialized in cruelty as a control mechanism, and crucifixion, especially of a popular religious figure, did its work very well with the population.

When the disciples sounded convincing in announcing that God had overturned tragedy and raised Jesus, people paid heed. Everything the disciples were saying and doing indicated that God was undermining the oppressors and powers of evil. That meant that there was new hope for everyone.

Today's Gospel begins Jesus' Good Shepherd discourse. Immediately after telling religious leaders that they were choosing to be blind guides (John 9), he announces

that he is the "gate," the way into the sharing of divine life that we call salvation.

Now, instead of concentrating on what people see, Jesus underlines what we hear with the heart. Most popular images of the Good Shepherd tend to depict Jesus carrying the lost sheep; here, Jesus focuses on recognizing the shepherd's voice and the way the shepherd and sheep know one another.

Today some might call the relationships Jesus describes among the sheep and shepherd as "interbeing." The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh popularized this word to describe the absolute interconnectedness and interdependence of everything that exists. There is nothing that happens, nothing we do or say, no event that does not have effects on everything else. We live in one another as well as with one another.

While physics and psychology tell us that universal interconnectedness is the basic reality in which we exist, we often fail to perceive it. Therefore, we can imagine that we are independent, self-made and related to others by choice rather than by nature. The relationship Jesus describes with his sheep is one in which both sides choose to be aware of and cultivate their inescapable, intimate interrelationship.

Advertisement

Jesus says that the sheep know his voice. As human beings, we resonate with people, ideas and activities that give us life, that urge us toward all that each of us is uniquely capable of becoming. These are expressions of the voice of the shepherd who desires to lead us to green pastures, restful water, freedom from fear. When we heed that voice, when we allow it to become more powerful in us, we grow in union with God and all that belongs to God.

The Good Shepherd speaks with a thousand voices, to each of us in the deepest part of our being and to all together. The Shepherd allures us, offering the verdant future for which God created us, the unending experience of complete union in and with God. Jesus calls this "abundant life."

Today's Liturgy of the Word offers us a renewed image of Christ the Good Shepherd. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke portray the Good Shepherd as the one who leaves 99 well-behaved sheep to rescue the stray. John takes the image to a new level.

According to John, the shepherd and the sheep know each other intimately and the shepherd leads the sheep into all that gives life. When Jesus says that he calls each by name, he's saying that he knows each of them uniquely, loving their distinct gifts, talents, desires and limitations. He knows and loves them in all their differences and as so intimately related that they form one whole. Later he explains it: I in them, them in me, all in God (John 17:21).

This is the heart-moving Gospel that Peter proclaimed. Without the proofs of physics or psychology, Peter helped the people see that the risen Christ is indeed the door that opens to union with God and the shepherd who leads us there. The miracle is that we can cultivate our awareness of this and live it more deeply. That's so fantastic that it would be impossible to exaggerate.