

## Fourth Sunday of Easter [a]

April 13, 2008

### Readings

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

1 Peter 2:20b-25

John 10:1-10

### Calendar

April 15: Income Tax Day in the United States

April 17: World Day of Prayer for Vocations

April 19: Passover begins in the evening

April 22: Earth Day

### Quotes

The ministries which exist and are at work at this time in the Church are all, even in their variety of forms, a participation in Jesus Christ's own ministry as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep, the humble servant who gives himself without reserve for the salvation of all.

*John Paul II, Christifideles Laici*

In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.

*Paul VI, Octogesima Adveniens, A Call to Action*

It is disturbing to witness a globalization that exacerbates the conditions of the needy, that does not sufficiently contribute to resolving situations of hunger, poverty and social inequality, that fails to safeguard the natural environment. These aspects of globalization can give rise to extreme reactions, leading to excessive nationalism, religious fanaticism and even acts of terrorism.

All of this is far-removed from the concept of an ethically responsible globalization capable of treating all peoples as equal partners and not as passive instruments. Accordingly, there can be little doubt of the need for guidelines that will place globalization firmly at the service of authentic human development — the development of every person and of the whole person — in full respect of the rights and dignity of all.

*John Paul II, May 2, 2003*

Forgiveness is needed for solving the problems of individuals and peoples. There is no peace without forgiveness!

*John Paul II, January 1, 2004*

I don't want to betray my children; I don't want to fail to do the necessary for Jesus, living on in his members. It's Jesus who is in this unhappy situation. 'Whatever you do to one of these little ones, you do to me.' I don't want to be a bad shepherd or a dumb watch-dog. I'm afraid of sacrificing Jesus for a quiet life and a strong taste for tranquility, for my cowardice and natural shyness."

*Charles de Foucauld*

## Thoughts for your consideration

Today's image of the good shepherd can challenge us to apply this image to the wider world.

- Does not the good shepherd challenge our international institutions to show a special care for those in need – the poor, the powerless, women, children, minorities, refugees, etc.?
- Does it not challenge our nation and its institutions to a more sincere respect for human rights?
- Does it not invite us to use the techniques of nonviolence rather than the weapons of war and intimidation?
- Does it not challenge us to address the issues of inequality of educational opportunity experienced by many children?

A world that makes real the loving care of the good shepherd must work to put an end to all kinds of abuse that may be endured by God's people. We must not forget those who are abused by unjust economic systems, children who are denied a good education or proper nutrition, nations whose people are abused by mountains of debt and by the policies of international financial institutions, those who work hard for something less than a living wage, women who are denied basic human or economic rights, and all who are abused in any way by the structures of injustice.

Like the people in today's story from Acts who were "cut to the heart," we are aware of our own failures, personal and communal. Peter says, "Repent." He says forgiveness and reform is possible and thousands come to salvation. Our church, our nation, and our world also can move toward a new life and redemption. Our world can come to salvation! As John Paul II once wrote, "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song."

## Questions for Reflection in your Faith Sharing Group

- The people in Acts "were cut to the heart" after hearing Peter. Then they wanted to know what to do. What situations of in our world "cut to your heart" and make you want to take action of some sort to promote justice?
- When and where have you seen individuals or groups of people being abused by "bad shepherds" or by institutions and the system?

## Actions - Links

The **Ignatian Solidarity Network** is organized to “facilitate and enhance the effectiveness of existing social justice and advocacy efforts that are currently present in Jesuit affiliated high schools, universities and colleges, parishes, retreat centers, independent organizations and lay individuals across the nation.” Goto: <http://www.ignatiansolidarity.net>

“**Physicians for Social Responsibility** is a non-profit advocacy organization that is the medical and public health voice for policies to stop nuclear war and proliferation and to slow, stop and reverse global warming and toxic degradation of the environment.” Goto: <http://www.psr.org>. Their take action page is asking people to consider asking the government not to develop more nuclear weapons at this time.

## “Crazy Facts”

A recent study by McKinsey and Co. reports that “In South Korea and Germany, starting salaries for teachers are about 141% of per capita GDP, while the figure for the United States is only 81%. In fact, all countries in this sample pay their teachers a significantly higher relative wage as a starting salary compared to the United States.”

The US Labor Department reports that in March 2008, the unemployment rate in the United States rose from 4.8% to 5.1%.

## Prayers of Intercession

*Response: God, lead us on the road to justice.*

For those who have leadership roles in our governments and our church, we pray....

For all teachers that they may open students to truth and right action, we pray....

For journalists and writers that they may make us aware of those most in need, we pray....

For parents that they may share good and healthy values with their children, we pray.....

For all of us that we may be committed to the common good, we pray.....

# Prayers

## Shepherding for Justice

Good Shepherd, thanks for the shepherding.

Thanks shepherding us through the challenges of our life.

Thanks for shepherding our world with your vision of new life and justice.

Thanks for all those men and women who have joined in the shepherding.

Thanks for those who have listened to the needs of the poor and oppressed.

Thanks for those who have challenged us to listen.

Thanks for those who have showed us the way of nonviolent active love.

Thanks for those who have not forgotten your vision.

Good Shepherd, help us to shepherd each other on the journey.

Help us to be open and to listen to those in need.

Help us to speak up with courage and wisdom.

Help us to put our faith in action.

Good Shepherd, shepherd our complex institutions and governments.

May they be open to the needs of all.

May they listen to those who suffer.

May they welcome those who are left out.

May they put an end to war and violence.

May the poor and powerless know their power.

May minorities and refugees experience welcome.

May all women and children be honored with awesome respect.

May we all learn from one another.

May human rights rule the world.