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4th Sunday of Easter

Date: Sunday, May 11, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43–52
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 100:1–3, 5 | **Response:** Psalm 100:3c
Second Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14b–17
Gospel Acclamation: John 10:14
Gospel Reading: John 10:27–30
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

The sun rises over the land, touching the earth with golden light, just as the voice of the Good Shepherd calls out to his flock. “My sheep hear my voice,” Jesus tells us, “I know them, and they follow me.” The voice that speaks in the Gospel today is the same voice that echoes through the ages, the voice that called Abraham from his homeland, that spoke to Moses from the burning bush, that whispered to Elijah in the still, small wind. And now, in Christ, that voice takes flesh, calling not only Israel, but all the world, to the fullness of life. Just as the rising sun guides us into the day, so too does the voice of the Good Shepherd lead us into the fullness of life.

The Book of Acts from our First Reading paints another dramatic scene: Paul and Barnabas, full of zeal, preach in the synagogue at Antioch. Some believe; others reject them. The apostles do not hesitate. When the word of salvation is refused, they turn to the Gentiles, fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy:

> “I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.”

But this is not merely a historical moment; it is a pattern that continues to this day. The Gospel meets rejection, yet it never stops moving forward. It is like a river that will not be dammed, a fire that will not be extinguished. This fire is not a relic of the apostolic age—it is the same fire that burns in the heart of every true vocation today. It is the fire that calls to priesthood, religious life, and committed discipleship in the world—whether married or single. It seeks those who will listen, those who hunger for truth, those who, like the sheep of Jesus, recognize his voice.

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In our second reading from the Book of Revelation, John gives us a vision of what happens when that voice is heard. He sees a vast multitude, beyond counting, from every nation and language, standing before the throne of the Lamb. They have come through the great tribulation; their robes are washed clean in the blood of Christ. This is no mere poetic image. It is the reality of discipleship, a life that passes through suffering to reach glory. This is what a vocation is—a 'yes' that endures. Not a career path, but a journey shaped by the cross and crowned in resurrection. The Good Shepherd does not promise us a life free from trial, but he does promise to lead us through it.

> "They will never hunger or thirst again; … because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water."

And so the Psalm today is a hymn of trust:

> "Know that he, the Lord, is God. He made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the sheep of his flock."

This is not blind optimism but the deep confidence of those who have heard the Shepherd's voice and followed him. It is the trust of St. Ignatius, who, in his Spiritual Exercises, invites us to place ourselves entirely in God's hands, to seek only God's greater glory and our place within his divine plan. To say, as he did, "Take, Lord, and receive," is to place oneself under the care of the Good Shepherd. And this trust is the foundation of every genuine call. St. Ignatius knew this deeply: discernment begins not in anxiety, but in surrender. That's why he prayed…

> Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will— all I have and call my own.
>
> You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only your love and your grace. That is enough for me.

In that same spirit of trust and surrender, we are reminded by Pope Francis of blessed memory, who called us to remember that 'the voice of the Shepherd still calls us today, and his message is clear: we are all invited to be witnesses to the joy of the Gospel and to work for the Kingdom of God, especially in the midst of

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a world that often feels lost.' Pope Francis invited us to listen carefully and courageously follow the voice of the Shepherd in our own time, as so many have done before us. How is the Shepherd calling you today?

The challenges are many: economic hardship, political uncertainty, the struggle for dignity and justice. And yet, the Good Shepherd calls us still. He calls us to be a light, to be a voice for those who cannot speak, to care for the lost and the broken…

The Church does not proclaim an abstract Gospel, but a living one, a Gospel that must touch the real sufferings of our people. Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that the dignity of every human person is not just a theological principle but a moral imperative. Just as the first disciples refused to let rejection silence them, so too must we continue to work for justice, to uplift the poor, to stand in solidarity with those in need.

The call of the Shepherd is clear. It is a call to trust, to perseverance, to mission. But above all, it is a call to love. To love as he has loved us, to lay down our lives for others, to build a world that reflects the Kingdom he proclaims.

According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, discernment involves attentive reflection on the 'interior motions'—the spiritual movements or affective responses that arise as we contemplate our choices. These motions, whether consolations or desolations, guide us toward God's will. Discernment, then, begins with honest questions and careful listening. So let me ask…

- Where, in my own life, do I hear the voice of the Good Shepherd?
- How am I responding to the needs of the poor and marginalized?
- What does it mean for me to follow the Good Shepherd—today, here, now?

The Easter season is a time of renewal, a time of new life. Let us not be content to remain where we are, but let us follow the voice that leads us forward. For our Lord, the Good Shepherd, knows us. He calls us by name. And if we listen—if we truly listen—we will find ourselves walking the path that leads to eternal life.

Let us bring our hopes and questions to the Lord who calls us:

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Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd,
You call each of us by name,
and you lead us with tenderness and strength.
In every shadowed valley, you walk beside us.
In every dry place, you lead us to living water.

Teach us to listen for your voice—
in the cry of the poor,
in the silence of prayer,
in the longings of our hearts.

Take, Lord, and receive:
our freedom, our memory, our. understanding, our will.
All we have and hold you have given us.

Give us only your love and your grace,
and we shall have all we need.

Shepherd of our souls,
lead us onward in joy,
that we may follow you to green pastures,
and dwell in your house forever. Amen.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.