Fr Matthew Charlesworth, SJ
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4th Sunday of Easter

Date: Sunday, April 26, 2026 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** A
First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36–41
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1–6 | **Response:** Psalm 23:1
Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:20b–25
Gospel Acclamation: John 10:14
Gospel Reading: John 10:1–10
Preached at: the Chapel of Emmaus House **in the** Archdiocese of Harare, Zimbabwe**.**

There are voices that use people, and voices that care for people. We all know the difference. One voice pushes, flatters, and frightens. Another voice calls your name, tells the truth, and stays with you. Today Jesus says that his voice is like that. He is the Good Shepherd. He is also the gate. He is the one who leads us, and he is the safe way through.

Jesus is speaking in pictures his listeners would have known well. Sheep were gathered at night in a place of safety, with one opening. So when Jesus says, "I am the gate," he means something plain and simple: if you want life, come through me. If you want safety, come through me. If you want a way through fear, lies, and confusion, come through me. And if you follow me, you will not be trapped. You will find pasture. You will find room to live.

Then Jesus gives a warning. Not every leader is a shepherd. Some are thieves and bandits. They do not serve the flock. They use the flock. They take what they can and leave others hurt. We have seen that pattern in many places. Whenever people are treated like tools instead of persons, whenever the weak are used and then forgotten, that is not the work of a shepherd. A bad shepherd thinks first about himself. A good shepherd thinks first about the flock.

That is why this Sunday matters. It is Good Shepherd Sunday. It is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Today we pray that God will raise up priests, brothers, sisters, married couples, and generous lay leaders who will lead and love like Jesus. We do not need stars. We do not need men and women who chase status. We need people who will stay close to others, pray honestly, speak truthfully, and serve with love. We need shepherds.

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The first reading gives us Peter. He stands up and speaks clearly about Jesus. This is the same Peter who once lost courage and denied the Lord. But now he has changed. The risen Jesus has found him, forgiven him, and made him strong. The people listening are cut to the heart and ask, “What are we to do?” Peter gives a clear answer: repent, be baptised, receive the Holy Spirit. Turn round. Come back. Start again. Let God make you new.

That is good news, because all of us drift. The second reading says it plainly: “You were going astray like sheep.” That is true of every one of us. We drift into selfishness. We drift into anger. We drift into pride, gossip, comfort, and old habits. We drift into living on the surface. But Jesus does not stop being our shepherd when we wander. He comes looking for us. He brings us back. He does not save us by force. He saves us by love. Saint Peter says, “By his wounds you have been healed.” That is the kind of shepherd Jesus is.

And then we have Psalm 23. “The Lord is my shepherd.” Those words are so simple, but they carry so much. He leads me. He restores me. He stays with me in dark valleys. He prepares a table for me. This is not a prayer for people who have easy lives. It is a prayer for people who know fear, grief, danger, and weariness. It says that even there, God does not leave us.

That is why this Gospel speaks so strongly to our world. We see war in Ukraine. We see suffering in the Middle East. We see frightened families, broken homes, wounded children, and people worn down by grief. Pope Leo XIV has kept calling for peace, for dialogue, and for a real end to violence. He has kept urging the world to choose dialogue over violence and peace over war. That is what a shepherd does. A shepherd does not cheer the fire. A shepherd tries to put it out.

So today we should pray for vocations, and we should pray for peace. Peace in Ukraine. Peace in the Middle East. Peace in our homes. Peace in our communities. Peace in our country. Because war does not begin only with missiles and guns. It also begins in the heart. It begins when people stop seeing each other as human. It begins when pride grows bigger than truth, and anger starts pretending to be justice. Christ the Good Shepherd leads us another way.

And there is a word here for us as Jesuits too. Ignatius would tell us to enter the scene. See the sheepfold. Feel the cool morning air. Hear the shepherd’s voice. Watch the sheep lift their heads and follow. Then ask: which voice have I been

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following this week? The voice of Jesus, or the voice of fear? The voice of service, or the voice of ego? And then ask one more thing: which voice leaves me more truthful, more loving, more at peace in God, and which voice leaves me restless, cold, and turned in on myself? That is often how the Shepherd helps us recognise his voice.

Jesus says, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” He is not promising an easy life. He is promising a full life. A true life. A life not trapped by fear. A life not bent in on itself. A life lived with God and for others. That is what every real vocation is for. Not to make someone important, but to make someone available. Not to give status, but to give shape to love.

So let us pray today for shepherds after the heart of Christ.
Let us pray for young people who will not be afraid to give their lives to God.
Let us pray for priests and religious who are kind, faithful, honest, and brave.
Let us pray for peace where there is war, for truth where there are lies, and for hope where people are close to despair.
And let us pray for ourselves, that we may know the voice of the Shepherd and follow it.
Because his voice does not trap us. His voice brings us out into the open. His voice leads us to life.

And perhaps these three questions can stay with us this week:

- Which voice has really been shaping my choices lately?
- Where am I drifting, and what is one real step by which I can return to Jesus?
- How can I be a maker of peace this week, in my words, my decisions, and my relationships?

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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.

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