he Summit Online Exploring the Word 4th Sunday of Easter, Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus said:

'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life: they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from me. The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone, and no one can steal from the Father. The Father and Lare one.'

(John 10:27-30)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- · 'Pastor' is the Latin word for 'shepherd'. From this word, we have derived many terms used in the Church for people with a special role: pastor or priest, pastoral care, pastoral associate, pastoral council. These roles always imply a duty of love and care towards those for whom one is responsible.
- · The shepherd king was an ancient image of God that the Hebrew people used.
- In this gospel text, John addresses one issue that confronted his community: the heretical voices of those who sought to lead people away from-rather than towards-God.

EXPLORING THE WORD

This text in the Gospel of John is set in Jerusalem, while Jesus is there for the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22)-a feast celebrating God's presence in the temple. For Israel, the temple was more than just a building; It was a visible place where God resided in the hearts of his people. To go to the temple and worship was to 'approach God'. Jesus teaches something completely new in this text. He stands within the temple precinct and declares that only through him and through hearing his voice can people come to the Father. The voice of Jesus is both seen and heard in the events of his life, death and resurrection. It is through all these events that God's ways are made known to us.

- · How do you 'hear the voice' of Jesus?
- What are some of the conflicting voices we hear in our world? Which voices are the loudest? Where do these voices lead us?
- · What sense do you have of being called by name? How do you experience God's constant care for you?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- · What are the things about the Church and your particular community that make you feel like you belong?
- · These words from Jesus are spoken with the utmost confidence in their truth! How confident are you feeling that you know Jesus and that he will give you eternal life?
- What are the things that may 'steal you away' from listening to the voice of Jesus?
- · In your life, in what ways are you called on to act as a 'shepherd'-a leader, provider, protector?
- Who are the people who act as a shepherd to you? In what ways do they carry out this role for you?
- · Attend very carefully to the needs of those people who are in your care this week.
- Use today's psalm as your prayer this week:

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before him singing for joy.

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

We are his people, the sheep of his flock. Indeed how good is the Lord, eternal his merciful love. He is faithful from age to age.

We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

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SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

It has now been a few weeks since the newly baptised were initiated. Return again to the events of the Easter Vigil and explore the symbolism of some of the service, especially the anointing and the presentation of the candle.

- You could trace the links between the oil and chrism 'of salvation' (*RCIA*, §§291, 295) and the gospel reading for today. Where is salvation found?
- In what ways is Christ 'priest, prophet and king'? How are we called to be these as well?
- How can the newly baptised be assisted in keeping alight the 'flame of faith' so they can 'walk always as children of the light' (*RCIA*, §297)?
- What supports do we need to offer each other in the continued journey of faith?

SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

The care that a shepherd showed for his flock remains a powerful image in the Church, despite its origins in an ancient agricultural society. In our country, with its vast paddocks and endless fences, the work of a true shepherd has lost some of its meaning. However, the intimacy and tenderness of the image still remind us about the closeness of Christ in his relationship with all who believe in him.

LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- Who are the people of the 'flock' that make up your own community? What characteristics does your community have? Do the newly baptised have special gifts or talents that can be used to minister to specific members of your community?
- Continue using the Easter and initiation symbols in your prayer. You could use a simple anointing ritual to strengthen the newly baptised in their continued growth.
 Pray for each other, for all the sheep of the flock and for those who shepherd them. Conclude with an Easter song.

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