



FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

CYCLE C

Acts 13:14, 43–52

Revelation 7:9, 14–17

John 10:27–30

GATHERING

Last week we proclaimed praise, honor, glory and might, forever and ever to the One seated on the throne, and to the Lamb. This week we continue to celebrate the Lamb that was slain. We rejoice in the assurance of his shepherding voice.

(When the community has assembled the person who is hosting makes his/her way to each member with a plate on which there are some festive candies. Presenting the plate the one hosting greets the guest: "Happy Easter.")

This week's session begins with some sharing about how the members action responses to last week's session contributed to the continuation of the Easter celebration.

OPENING PRAYER

The song "Come, Worship the Lord" is played. It can be found on Utube.

Focus Question

What does it mean for you to be "secure"? What makes you feel secure"?

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

John 10:27–30

COMMENTARY

This week we observe the fourth Sunday *of* Easter, not the fourth Sunday *after* Easter. Easter is not over; we are fully in its midst. As liturgist John Melloh, S.M. reminds us, "Forty days of Lent make sense only in terms of fifty days of unrestrained rejoicing."

In the spirit of this week's liturgy then, "delight" in the message of salvation. Let us open ourselves "to be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit". We stand secure in the Lamb.

The reading from John is part of a larger treatment of Jesus as shepherd and disciples as members of his flock. It comes from John's pre-Easter narrative about Jesus but it is offered to us in this Easter-time as an invitation to celebrate with surety in the presence of the Lamb who shepherds.

The gospel selection is complemented by a story about the missionary Paul and an image of final expectation from the Book of Revelation.

In the readings of Lent there were hints of glory to come as the fruit of fidelity to God in the midst of suffering, rejection and death. But even now in the rejoicing of Easter time the call to endure in the midst of rejection, trial, and risk is still sounded. The Easter time road is not without its own challenges.

In the midst of rejoicing, the *imperative* from the Lenten account of the Transfiguration, "Listen to him" is heard again in this week's liturgy in the *declarative* from the Jesus of John's gospel: "My sheep hear my voice." It is in this attention to the voice of the shepherd that the flock stands secure.

Standing firm in the midst of the rejection of Paul and Barnabas, however, their disciples knew only how to be filled with joy and the Holy Spirit. In response to Paul's urging they held fast to the grace of God.

In Revelation we are assured that we can endure trial because the Lamb on the throne will be our shepherd. The one sacrificed for our sake will lead the faithful to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

While the call to continuing fidelity to God is ever present, the accent of these scriptures is on assurance and on the celebration that surety in the lamb invites. For to them that follow him, this Lamb who shepherds declares: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." With the Gentiles of Antioch in Pisidia, let us "delight" in hearing this word. Let us also "respond to the word of the Lord with praise."

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. Speak of a time when you knew you stood secure in the Lord.
2. How do you continue to *listen* to Jesus?
3. Share what it was like for you to have lived in peaceful assurance even in the midst of trial, sorrow or disappointment. How did you manage to do that?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Continue your Easter rejoicing. Invite friends to yet another Easter dinner. Let them know that it is a celebration of Easter to which you invite them. Begin the meal with one or two of the readings from this week's liturgy.
2. Offer some words of welcome and support to those in your parish who are newly received into the Church this Easter. Call your parish office to ask for the names and addresses of these persons. Send them a card with your Easter greetings.

3. In Easter's anticipative spirit of the time when never again shall anyone know hunger or thirst, reach out with the gift of personal service or financial support to those in your town or community in serious need.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Let us rejoice in the Lamb that was slain. To the One seated on the throne, and to the Lamb be praise, honor, glory and might, forever and ever!

All: We are his people: the sheep of his flock.

Leader: Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful song.

All: We are his people: the sheep of his flock.

Leader: Know that the Lord is God; he made us, his we are; his people, the flock he tends.

All: We are his people: the sheep of his flock.

Leader: The Lord is good: his kindness endures forever, and his faithfulness, to all generations.

All: We are his people: the sheep of his flock.

(The session concludes with the singing of a familiar "Alleluia" and the sharing of festive Easter refreshments.)