

## Children's liturgy – Fourth Sunday of Easter (Year B)

Colour: White

Props: Cardboard cut-outs of sheep. Cotton wool and glue. Felt tip pens, colouring pencils or crayons.

**Song suggestions:** I have called you by your name (136, Celebration Hymnal for Everyone)

**Welcome:** Today we are going to hear Jesus tell a story. He calls himself the good shepherd, who cares for his sheep. This story shows us that Jesus knows and cares for all people. Let's think about how we can care for all people too, no matter where they are in the world.

**Opening prayer:** Loving God, you know us and care for us. Help us to remember that all people are loved by you no matter who they are, and to care for others in the world as you do. Amen.

**First reading (optional):** Acts 4:8-12

**Psalm:** Ps 117:1.8-9, 21-23, 26.28-29

**Gospel acclamation:** sing the acclamation together. Suggestions: 'Celtic Alleluia'; 'Alleluia! Raise the Gospel' from 'Go Before Us', Bernadette Farrell, OCP Publications.

**Gospel:** John 10:11-18

"I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become[a] one flock with one shepherd.

"The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do."

*(Gospel passage taken from Good News Translation® and used with permission. \*)*

**Gospel reflection:** What do you remember from today's reading?

Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, who carefully looks after his sheep. Why do you think Jesus calls himself a shepherd?

Who do you think that the sheep are that Jesus talks about in this story?

When he says sheep, Jesus means us, because he cares for us and for all people around the world.

How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves and cares for you that much?

If a wolf came to attack the sheep in a field, someone who did not care about them would run away, and the sheep would scatter. But Jesus loves his sheep so much he is prepared to die to save them from danger!

Sometimes it can be very difficult to stop someone or something that we do not like or that we know is wrong. We might be afraid that we will be hurt or laughed at.

Have you ever felt like running away and hiding instead of standing up for someone? What happened? What did you do?

There are many things that happen in the world that are not right. Can you think of some? There are people around the world who have been forced to leave their homes because of fighting. There are people who do not have enough food to eat or clean water to drink. There are children who have to work and earn money to help support their families instead of going to school. Do you think this is fair? How does this make you feel?

Jesus wants us to follow his example. He asks us to care for all our brothers and sisters around the world, no matter who they are or where they come from. And he doesn't want us to run away when things are difficult. He wants us to stand up for what we believe and know to be right.

Jesus loves everybody the same amount, no matter where in the world they are from. How do you think we can do the same and show our love for everybody throughout the world?

How will you stand up for what you know is right and show your love for our global family this week?

**Intercessions:** *You may want to ask the children to offer their own prayers or you can use the suggestions below.*

We know that Jesus is our shepherd who cares for us and listens to us, and so we pray together:

We pray for world leaders: that they may follow Jesus' example and love and care for their people. Lord, hear us...

We pray for all members of our global family: that we may see that God loves us all equally and treat each other as we would wish to be treated. Lord, hear us...

We pray for our parish, family and friends: that we may not run away when things are hard, but instead look for what we can do to make the world a fairer place for everyone to live. Lord hear us...

**Closing prayer:** Loving God, help us to love and care for all your people throughout the world and to work together to make the world a better place. Amen.

**Activity suggestions:**

Ask the children to colour in the accompanying illustration. On the back ask them to write or draw what they think caring for the world and your neighbours means and the one thing they will do over the coming week to care for other people, especially those who are poor. Or ask them to write a prayer for all their brothers and sisters around the world who are having a hard life because of poverty.

Make sheep with the children – have the children decorate their cut-outs with cotton wool and felt tips. Have them write their name on the sheep and then stick them all on a big picture of the world, or if they are at home, they can go on the fridge or on a big piece of paper decorated like a field.

Ask the children to go home and share all they have heard and thought about today. If they have written a prayer ask them to say it together during the week and to do one thing this week to show their love for their global family.

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