

Rectoría San Juan de Dios
IV Sunday of Easter, Cycle A
Acts 2, 14.36-41; Ps 23; 1 Pt 2, 20-25; Jn 10, 1-10
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Let Us Enter Through the Gate

The figure of Jesus as the *Good Shepherd* has endured for these two thousand years, keeping its original meaning. Although in our time the figure of a shepherd has become almost a thing of the past, its significance has not. When we hear that there are some sheep that are being led by their shepherd, we imagine a social order of peace and security. It seems that the same image that Jesus used so many years ago is still as powerful as it was then, to help us understand our most profound relationship with God. It is a relationship so intimate that it is sustained by a bond of love and reciprocal consciousness such as that which exists between the sheep and their shepherd.¹

In the passage of the Gospel of John that we heard today, the shadow of the *bad shepherds* also appears. The *bad shepherds* are those responsible for the community who have perverted the reason for their service and instead of giving life to the sheep, sacrifice them. These *bad shepherds* rob, kill, and destroy; they have turned into agitators and thieves.

¹ We have heard in the Gospel that the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd and follow him along the road, but they will not follow a stranger. And the true shepherd enters through the gate, that is, there is an immediate, close relationship between him and his sheep.

It seems that in our current society, the *bad shepherds* have proliferated. Many whose responsibility it is to lead the people, whether civil or religious authorities, have lost the real essence of their mission. Instead, they have run roughshod over the sheep, oppressing and exploiting them. They pretend to enter through the gate, that is, they pretend to adhere to the spirit of the law, but in reality, they have gone over to the other side. They manipulate the law in order to exercise control or power.

Jesus, in addition to being the *Good Shepherd*, declares that He *is the gate*. Since the Pharisees, to whom He was directing His discourse about the *Good Shepherd*, did not understand, He added: "*I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but my sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.*" What does it mean to say that Jesus is the gate of the sheepfold? It means that only by assuming that role can the shepherd/pastor approach the people in a legitimate way. If pastors, not only we who are consecrated, but those who bear public responsibility or those who exercise authority such as fathers of families, act outside of the Person who is the origin and principle of serving, we will end up by turning into *bad pastors*, oppressors and exploiters.

For pastors, *to enter through the gate* that is Jesus means to renew our code of service and love with the spirit of Jesus. And for the sheep, *to enter through the gate* means to have order, peace, and life.

Christ as the *gate* is the place of God's shelter for us; He opened it by the Incarnation and He opens and closes it to give us life through His resurrection. Come, let us enter through the gate with these three approaches:

1-Let us ask ourselves the fundamental question.

In the first reading we hear that, in the presence of Peter's preaching, those present on the day of Pentecost were touched in their hearts and asked: "*What do we have to do?*" This is the fundamental question to begin to enter through Jesus, who is the gate as much for pastors as for the sheep. Peter responded that they had to be converted and be baptized in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

To ask the fundamental question means being safe from the corrupt world and to reconsider what we are doing with our life.

2-Let us recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd approaches openly and with sincerity, without an ulterior motive. Although at times we hear seductive voices that would lead us to false paradises, we must discern the authenticity of those voices and compare them with the voice of the Good Shepherd who announces the alternative of liberty and life. The Good Shepherd announces Christ and not himself and he makes a way worthy of service and love with the sheep.

3-Let us commit ourselves to life.

The more times we pass through the gate, the more authentic we will be and the more we will be generating life for others. Shepherds and sheep, we have to “listen and follow” the Good Shepherd. In the midst of a world of false shepherds, how important it is to commit ourselves to life, starting from our full communion with God!

Let us pass all things through Christ. Let us go in and go out through Him so that our works will have meaning.