

Rectoría de San Juan de Dios
IV Sunday of Easter, Cycle B
Acts 4, 8-12; Ps 118; 1 Jn 3, 1-2; Jn 10, 11-18
Fr Dante Gabriel Jiménez Muñoz Ledo

Let Us Give Life

The Gospel that we heard today is a pre-Easter text. In contrast to the past Sundays of Easter in which the risen Jesus appears to the disciples with a glorified body, here we see Jesus in the full exercise of His ministry. It is a text full of the meaning of Easter because in it Jesus declares that he would give His life for humanity.

If we pay close attention, we see that these verses from the Gospel of John are laden with the feelings of Jesus. We imagine the people whom He has in front of Him: a good group of followers who He knows are tired of the abandonment and betrayal they have experienced from the political and religious authorities of their time. Jesus speaks to them in the language of the pastoral life because theirs is a culture of shepherds. He compares them to sheep without a shepherd. It is painful for Jesus to see people in need of attention and life. For that reason, He defines Himself using an image that fits His being the Messianic Savior: *“I am the good shepherd...who lays down his life for his sheep.”*

At this time in our history, we could describe our society in this way: as a world of people tired of the abandonment and betrayal of our leaders. A world in which no one wants to give even a little bit of his life; in which the great majority live with the attitude of *hired employees*, that is, focusing on their own advantage, without worrying about others, but only about themselves and their own interests.

We can use the distinction that Jesus makes, *hired men and shepherds*, to reflect deeply this Sunday. From our personal and communal awareness, we think about how we are going through life, with what kind of attitude? As *hired men*? That is, as those who never give more of ourselves if our salary is not raised? Or as *shepherds*, as those who are ready to carry burdens for others, to accompany others, to expend ourselves without expecting recompense, even if necessary to give our life for the most vulnerable.

The world needs life, the life of the risen Jesus that we have received this Easter. We can all be shepherds: a father or a mother of a family or someone can be a shepherd to his younger brother or sister or to some friend or needy person. This is the proposal: *Do we dare to give life as good and new shepherds?* How do we begin? Let us try three ideas:

1-Let us build a society of witnesses.

Peter explains to the disciples that they are building a community based on witness, a community capable of retelling history and of showing the liberating power of Christ. In Peter—no longer the Peter paralyzed by fear—we find a community of persons made complete by the Spirit, prepared to declare that the savior of man is not man himself but Jesus of Nazareth, who died and rose again. Only in His name can someone be fully saved. Jesus is the only one who can restore man to personal wholeness.

If we dare to build a society of witnesses, we will be mindful of building it on the cornerstone that is Jesus.

Many young people see the future without hope, as a future that is escaping from their grasp. There are so many who have already let down their guard in their struggle to build a future...some have even taken their own lives. It

seems to me that only if those of us who have gone a bit further in life and have experienced the new life of Jesus give them guarantees in our testimony, will we be able to give them a little life and pass on to them an itinerary of hope.

2-Let us dare to know with the heart of shepherds

In the way that Jesus says that He knows His sheep, as someone who knows from love, from accompaniment, with a relationship free of ulterior motives, a free relationship sustained in love freely given.

If we are Sons of God, it is because we were born in love and we can know as He knows us, intimately. To know someone trying to make a common cause is a gift of liberty.

3-Let us achieve the fullness of our being.

It could be that many of us have made the attempt to be full and complete. We hear about the fullness of Jesus when he says: *“This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.”*

The fullness of our being is achieved by giving ourselves unsparingly for others, in contrast to a hired man; exhausting ourselves for others, experiencing how far we are capable of climbing in the experience of love. When one gives all of himself, so much richness is produced that his life is transformed into a life of freedom. Others receive this unique richness from us that they would never gain in any other way.

I hope that this Sunday, and during the week, we are able to define ourselves by embodying this image of Jesus, as good shepherds, so that the world may have life.