

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

## LECTIONARY #50

READING I Acts of the Apostles 4:8-12

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said:

“Leaders of the people and elders:

If we are being examined today

about a good deed done to a cripple,

namely, by what means he was saved,

then all of you and all the people of Israel should know that it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean

whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead,

in his name this man stands before you healed.

He is the stone rejected by you, the builders,

which has become the cornerstone.

There is no salvation through anyone else,

nor is there any other name under heaven

given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”

As you prepare, read Acts 4:1-7 to put this reading in context.

Nazorean = naz-uh-REE-uhn

Use confidence. We don't need to look for other options.

### READING I

Today's first reading, from Luke's Acts of the Apostles, regarding their authority and their use of the name through which the crippled man was healed. Peter boldly clarifies that it is the power of Jesus Christ, and God who raised him, that saved the crippled man. The use of "saved" echoes Acts 2:21, where Peter declared that "everyone shall be saved who calls on the name of the Lord." As in earlier speeches, Peter states that they (the people and the leaders) had crucified Jesus. But now he goes further. By citing and slightly altering Psalm 118:22 (Psalm 117:22 in the Septuagint), Peter replaces them with the people and the disciples are met with skeptical questioning.

John are questioned by the Sanhedrin the image of the stone rejected (*apedokimasan* in Greek) with the stone scorned features yet another speech from Peter. This fourth speech is the first directed at the leaders and elders of the people, and it addresses the same event as last week: the healing of a man crippled from birth. Whereas last week's speech to the people was explanatory and received a sympathetic hearing (Acts 4:4), this speech is confrontational, and the disciples are met with skeptical questioning.

Having been taken into custody while they were speaking to the people, Peter and

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 118:1, 8–9, 21–23, 26, 28, 29 (22)

R. The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

or

R. Alleluia.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,

for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD

than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD

than to trust in princes.

I will give thanks to you, for you have

answered me

and have been my savior.

The stone which the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

By the LORD has this been done;

it is wonderful in our eyes.

Blessed is he who comes in the name

of the LORD;

we bless you from the house of the LORD.

I will give thanks to you, for you have

answered me

and have been my savior.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;

for his kindness endures forever.

### A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

**Beloved:**

See what love the Father has bestowed on us

that we may be called the children of God.

Yet so we are.

The reason the world does not know us

is that it did not know him.

Beloved, we are God's children now;

what we shall be has not yet been revealed.

We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him,

for we shall see him as he is.

### READING II

Today's short reading from 1 John takes a break from

the Elder's arguments against the seces-

sionists to reflect upon and ponder what the

community has already received: the status

of being children of God. In the Johannine

tradition, the term "Son" is reserved for

Jesus' relationship with the Father, while

the term "child" identifies the believers'

relationship with God. This identify is

affirmed in both verses of this reading.

The reading appears simple and clear,

but it is made complex by the unclear use

of "he" and "him." Do the pronouns refer to

### GOSPEL

If the second reading provides a very affirmative understanding of the believer as a child of God, today's Gospel offers an equally affirming image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, all with a uniquely Johannine flair. Drawn from a section of John's Gospel that describes the end of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (John 7:1–10:21) and set during the feast of Booths, John employs the image of the shepherd. Throughout the Old

there is no way to be absolutely sure, but there is a logical flow to the passage when the pronouns are understood as referring to God the Father. Using God the Father as the lens helps to clarify the texts: the world did not know God. And, when "what we shall be" has been revealed, then we will be like God, for we shall see God as God is. In the end, the Elder provides his readers, and us, with confidence in what we already are (children of God), and a revelation of what we will be (like God as God is), thereby

GOSPEL John 10:11-18

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said:

"I am the good shepherd.

A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

A hired man, who is not a shepherd

and whose sheep are not his own,

sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away,

and the wolf catches and scatters them.

This is because he works for pay and has no concern for

the sheep.

I am the good shepherd,

and I know mine and mine know me,

just as the Father knows me and I know the Father,

and I will lay down my life for the sheep.

I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.

These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice,

and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

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.

I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again.

This command I have received from my Father:"

Visio divina uses art to help us enter more deeply into prayer. As you prepare, pray with a picture of Jesus carrying a lamb. Jesus is teaching us who he is. Use a fatherly tone. He gently instructs us.

Emphasize the divine name, "I am." We are intimately connected to Jesus the shepherd, and he is intimately connected to God.

Contrast "down" and "up." Jesus is in uncontested control. "No one" can challenge him.

Testament, God was identified as the shepherd of Israel, in contrast to Israel's unfaithful and corrupt leaders (bad shepherds). This led to the expectation of an ideal Davidic shepherd-messiah. John goes beyond that tradition, however. In contrast to the messianic shepherd, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will lay down his life for the sheep. This idea of self-giving has no parallel in Israel's messianic texts. This self-gift is contrasted with the actions of the hired worker, who abandons the sheep. Repeating again "I AM the good shepherd," Jesus employs one of

seven "I AM" sayings unique to John. They are reminiscent of God's self-identification to Moses—I AM (Exodus 3:13-14)—and clearly connect Jesus' identity to that of God. This connection is deepened through Jesus' use of the word "know." He knows his sheep and they know him, just as the Father knows him and he knows the Father. In essence, Jesus surpasses the Davidic shepherd-messiah tradition, and his role as shepherd flows from his oneness with the Father. Jesus' relationship with the Father, through which he reveals the Father's love, also amazingly and creatively enlarges the

sheepfold. Whereas Israel is the original sheepfold, Jesus' self-gift includes Israel and extends to the world beyond, with the result that he will bring others into the fold to create one flock that has one shepherd. The idea of enlarging is an apt one, for today's readings expand our understanding of God, Jesus, ourselves, our world, and the scope of God's love. S.L.