

Fourth Sunday of Easter



*Almighty ever-living God,
lead us to share in the joys of Heaven,
so that the humble flock may reach
where the brave Shepherd has gone before.
Who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Collect for Fourth Sunday of Easter

In the Keweenaw, we do not have much experience with shepherds and their flocks though Scripture is filled the imagery of shepherds and their sheep. On this Fourth Sunday, we continue our preparation for the coming of the Spirit on Pentecost Sunday. Our Opening Collect reminds us of why we are on this earth: *to share in the joys of Heaven*. Often, we are asked to pray for someone who is seriously ill and may look upon their death as if God did not hear our prayer. It seems as though we forget that Heaven is our destiny.

The Litany of the Good Shepherd

*God the Father of the Lamb, have mercy on us.
God the Son, Sacrificial Lamb, have mercy on us.
God the Holy Spirit, Life of the Lamb, have mercy on us.*

*O Good Jesus, Shepherd of the just, hear us.
Vigilant Finder of lost sheep, guide us.
Fervent Hope of the fallen lamb, guide us.
Constant Gatherer of a broken flock, guide us.
O Good Shepherd, hear Your sheep.*

*Purest shelter of the yearning heart, feed us.
Perpetual Feast of the hungry soul, feed us.
Lasting Bread of perfect Life, feed us.
O Good Shepherd, hear Your sheep.*

*Patient Tamer of rebellious wills, shear us.
Loyal Teacher of all kind of commands, shear us.
Tender Purger of all blemish of sin, shear us.
O Good Shepherd, hear Your sheep.*

*From the lures of false shepherds hiding in Your guise, protect us.
From mirages of richer fields, conquering our minds, protect us.
From diseases of the soul, separating us from Your flock, protect us.*

May 7, 2017



*O Good Shepherd, at once the Guard and Lamb,
Who knows well the sheep He leads,
Guide us, feed us, shear us,
and bid us come to You,
delighting in Your Heavenly pasture,
and praising You
forever and ever. Amen.*

<http://catholictradition.org/Litanies/litany31.htm>

In the Catholic tradition, our bishops use a staff which is very symbolic of a shepherd. We acknowledge that our bishops are successors of the Apostles. Our Holy Father is the successor of Peter. Our Church has deliberately chosen readings to deepen our relationship with the Trinity. We are being Shepherded into the greatness of Heaven.

When we pray with the Liturgy of the Word, we deepen and grow into our relationship with the Good Shepherd. For the past several weeks, we have been hearing from the sermon of Peter on Pentecost Sunday (Acts 2).

*"Let the whole house of Israel know for certain
that God has made both Lord and Christ,
this Jesus whom you crucified."*

(Acts 2:36)

As Peter said these words, the hearts of the listeners were cut to the quick, and they questioned what they needed to do to be saved.

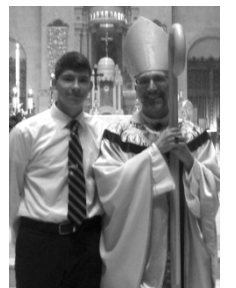
*"Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
For the promise is made to you and to your children
and to all those far off,
whomever the Lord our God will call."*

(Acts 2:38-39)

On 15th April, the Easter Vigil, throughout the Universal Church, people were received into the Church through baptism or coming from other Christian traditions by their baptism. At this time, they were also Confirmed, receiving the Gifts of the Spirit.



The Easter season is a special time for people to receive Sacraments of Initiation. On April 23rd three young women, Regan Aho, Kate Filpus and Clare O'Donnell, received First Eucharist at St. Anne's for the first time. This past Sunday sixty-five people were confirmed at Saint Peter Cathedral by Bishop John Doerfler, one being Elijah Soumis from St. Anne's. Each one of these



people, over two thousand years later, took the words of Saint Peter to heart, following Jesus as the Good Shepherd.



Our Psalm Response is Psalm 23, one of the most well-known psalms throughout history. Often it is used at funeral Masses but in reality, it should be a prayer for our daily life. It is filled with a promise that we will need nothing. Nothing can destroy our life, so we are fully rested. An important part of our life is daily prayer. This guides us into a deeper union with our God. We are led away from sinfulness. We recognize that our life has foes, but the Lord protects us from them. In our Catholic-Christian life we receive two very important anointings at Baptism and Confirmation.

At Baptism, we are anointed on our chest with the Oil of the Catechumen, the student. Later in the ceremony we are anointed with Sacred Chrism. This reminds us that we are called to be a priest, a prophet, and a king.

Being a priest means that we are to be leaders of prayer. If we think about children, how many parents can say they have not prayed for their children? Honestly, parents pray for their children for their whole life! A prophet is a person who challenges our lifestyle. If we think about parenting, parents' lives are changed, as children come into their lives. A king is a person who manages ministries or tasks. When we parent, we need to help our children with time management and as the children become adults they continue in this task.

At Confirmation, we are anointed with Sacred Chrism by the Bishop (or his appointed delegate). At this time, we receive the Gifts of the Spirit which guides us through our lifetime. During the Last Supper Jesus promised that we would not be left alone and He would send the Spirit, the Paraclete, to be with us always.

We are promised goodness and kindness throughout our lifetime. Finally, we are promised our eternal home if we spend our life united to our God.

In our reading from Peter (1 Peter 2:20b-25) we are reminded of the reality of suffering in our life. Daily life is not void of suffering.

The Perfect One, Jesus, endured suffering, being the sinless one, for our redemption. Looking in our world we see wars and violence, diseases of all kinds, turmoil on a large scale and in our homes. Suffering is real! *"He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed."* (1 Peter 20:24)



The high-point of the liturgy of the word comes in the Gospel (John 10: 1-10). One of the images that many of us have seen is the Gates of Heaven. We envision Christ, the judge

of the living and the dead, welcoming us at the gate so we can enter heaven for all eternity. That is not saying that we may not need some purification (purgatory) to go through the Gates of Heaven.



At the moment of our Baptism our parents are asked *What name have you given your child?* We are known for all eternity by this name. In the Rite of Baptism, we begin at the door of the church, which truly is the gate to our union with God, the gate to all the other Sacraments, setting us on the path to heaven. No one is able to steal union with God, being united with the People of God, Body of Christ. Our priests, by virtue of their Ordination, have been anointed by the Sacred Chrism to shepherd each of us on our way to heaven.

Throughout our lives, we must be attentive to follow the voice of Christ rather than following false voices and ways. We cannot be like the Pharisees whose rigidity did not allow them to hear the truth of the words of Christ. We need to hold in our hearts the words of Christ: *I came so that they may have life and have it more abundantly.* (John 10:10)

*O my Lord and Savior,
support me in my last hour by the strong arms of Your Sacraments
and the fragrance of Your consolations.
Let Your absolving words be said over me, and the holy oil sign and seal me;
and let Your own Body be my food and Your blood my sprinkling;
and let Your Mother Mary come to me, and my angel whisper peace to me,
and Your glorious saints and my own dear patrons smile on me,
that in and through them all I may die as I desire to live, in Your Church, in Your faith, and
in Your love. Amen.*

Blessed John Cardinal Henry Newman

As we pray, one of the sacraments that we may receive is the Anointing of the Sick, when we are suffering an illness that deprives us of our normal, everyday life. This is another time that we are anointed with oil, the Oil of the Sick, blessed by our Bishop at the Chrism Mass and brought back to our churches on Holy Thursday. The prayer also asks of our God that we may receive Viaticum, *food for the journey*, in the Eucharist.

Being part of the Body of Christ we are united with our Mother Mary and all the saints in heaven. In our life too, we know we have been guarded by an angel given to us specially by God.

On our life's journey, we can pray to our guardian angel: *Angel of God, my Guardian dear, to whom His love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.*

