

Fourth Sunday of Easter

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. *(Acts 2:42-43)*

Friends:

How many times have you attended a baptism, rehearsed with the congregation your Baptismal Covenant, and made the following promise?

Celebrant Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
People I will, with God's help.

The answer is, of course, many times, and now you can see biblically where that portion of the covenant comes from. The occasion is the so-called Pentecost speech of Peter, a series of events immediately following the first Pentecost, a time in the Jesus movement when the Spirit of God was “bouncing off the walls”—as a priest friend of mine from the west coast used to say.

Our first reading today talks about the communal lives of the newly baptized, not only as expressed in the Baptismal Covenant, but also in sharing resources with the needy and gathering around the table for shared meals and worship.

I would LOVE to gather around the table for shared meals and worship with the good folks of St. Paul's! You would too, I know. For now and for good reason, we depend on the written word we share with one another, with phone calls, with zoom meetings, . . . This IS, after all, caring for one another; and care for all persons, for all of God's creation, is at the heart of dynamic, living Christianity.

Faithfully,
Fr. Reed+ (904)472-4119 cell

The Collect

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Relief from the Virus Contagion

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, graciously comfort your people amid the uncertainty facing us in the Coronavirus contagion: Mercifully attend to those who are sick, bless those who seek a vaccine and cure, bless our Church and civic leaders as they seek to guide us, and fill our hearts with confidence that, though at times we may be afraid, we may still put our trust in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Concluding Collect: For the Election of a Rector

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish, that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

First Reading—Acts 2:42-47

Those who had been baptized devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Psalm 23*Dominus regit me*

1 The Lord is my shepherd; *
I shall not be in want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures *
and leads me beside still waters.

3 He revives my soul *
and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I shall fear no evil; *
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who
trouble me; *
you have anointed my head with oil,
and my cup is running over.

6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of
my life, *
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Second Reading—1 Peter 2:19-25

It is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Holy Gospel—John 10:1-10

Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”