

# Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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April 26, 2026

Brothers and Sisters,

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday, the fourth Sunday in Easter Season. The name of the Sunday derives from the gospel reading for this Sunday, John 10:1-10, which presents Jesus as the "Good Shepherd" who lays down his life for his sheep. The good shepherd is described as a caring shepherd who knows, loves and leads the sheep and lays down his life for them. The image of the shepherd appealed to the listeners of Jesus and to the early Christians. Sheep and shepherd shared an intimate and lifelong relationship. This was a good and readily understood image which described the bond between Jesus and his followers.

Our good shepherd, Jesus, in laying down his life for us, secured our safety and our salvation. Let us look to this good shepherd for direction and follow his direction! "I am the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep," says Jesus. What an amazing relationship between disciples and their master!!! How awesome it is that we have become cherished and prized objects of divine diligence, vigilance and sacrifice!!!

Shepherds of Israel had a close, intimate and lifelong relationship with the sheep. Their closeness made them smell like the sheep. They could easily be recognized as shepherds and that is a challenge for the modern leaders and ministers. Will the leaders and ministers of today be recognized as disciples of Jesus? Will their presence disseminate a Christian fragrance? Will their speech and actions add a Christian flavor to modern culture? Their presence will definitely make a difference if they nurture an intimate relationship with Christ.

Shepherds of Israel were attentive, vigilant and watchful. And that is the challenge of all leaders and ministers of the modern world whether they are parents or teachers or ministers or leaders in government - they must be attentive, vigilant and watchful. It takes watchfulness to care well for those entrusted to our care, to teach sound doctrine, healthy values and morals, and to develop noble friendships and relationships. It takes watchfulness to enable others to discover and correct their mistakes. It takes watchfulness to help others, especially our children, watch their lives - their career choices, moral decisions, parenting skills, spiritual disciplines, etc. It takes watchfulness to guide their conduct - their doctrines, moral standards and their views of the Church, of God and of the world.

We prayed Psalm 23, the beautiful Psalm of David, as our responsorial Psalm today. David had been a shepherd and he knew how to care for the sheep and what it cost him. He became shepherd of his people. He had to figure out how he should care for them. He knew the sheep

well and now he must come to know his people, their ways, their needs and their concerns. This problem gave him a new awareness of what God, the true shepherd, is like in his relationship to his people. Like shepherd...God knows his people just as they are in all their needs, in their stubbornness and stupidity as well as in their value and worth.

Like a shepherd...God reaches out and searches out the lost and keeps them safe. Like a shepherd...God provides food, drink, safety, light in darkness, comfort and strength in “dark valley moments”. In this Psalm, David proclaims the enduring, steadfast, loyal, unconquerable love of God, the good shepherd, who will never let us slip out of his hands!

Our Gospel reading today gives us the beautiful and inspiring image of the shepherd, who has an intimate and very personal knowledge of the sheep, calling the sheep by name and the sheep recognizing his voice, leading the sheep and keeping them safe (John 10:1-10). This image of the shepherd reveals the unfailing vigilance and self-sacrificing love of God for us in Jesus. Jesus is presented as this shepherd - a caring, listening, sensitive and self-sacrificing leader who is vigilant and mindful of the sheep in his care.

This excerpt also tells us that the listeners of Jesus did not understand this parable. So he told them another parable that speaks of himself as the door or gate of the sheepfold. The hillside sheepfolds in Palestine were open spaces enclosed by a wall with only an opening and no door. The Shepherd would lie down across the opening and no sheep could get in or out except over his body – the shepherd became the door or the gate. This is the image that Jesus used when he said, “I am the gate”. It is through Jesus that we find access to God. In and through Jesus we have a new sense of security and safety. In and through Jesus we have life in abundance. He says, he came so that we may “have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Too many shepherds act as if the sheep are there for their benefit. They forget that they have the responsibility to tenderly care for the sheep. A good shepherd shears his flock, not flays them. A good shepherd goes in search of the straying sheep and does not beat up the sheep when he finds it but brings it back safe to the fold. We must look to Jesus as our good shepherd, leader and friend! And like the good shepherd, be a caring, sensitive and self-sacrificing leader! We must learn to make these qualities ours in our ministry as a parent or educator or pastor or political or social leader.

I want to encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on how your day has been. Reflect on how you have been caring for those in your care following the example of Jesus, our good shepherd.

God bless you and your family

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of today's mass....**

# Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2026

**God is not a celestial policeman keeping law and order and looking out for lawbreakers.  
He is a shepherd seeking for the lost sheep, a woman searching for lost coins,  
a father waiting for his lost son and an all-embracing, self-sacrificing friend.**

## Collect

Almighty ever-living God,  
lead us to a 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.

## Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**Dear Lord, grant us the gift of serenity that we may seek to bring peace and  
comfort to those under heavy burdens and pressures of life.**

## Acts 2:14, 36-41

Peter reminded the Jews that Jesus, whom they crucified, is Messiah and Lord. This excerpt tells us that when they realized this, they asked Peter and the other apostles what they must do. Peter called them to conversion, a change of heart, to Baptism, to forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Many responded to his call.

**Easter reminds us of our own Baptism...we are immersed into the mystery of God's life and love...now we must live and move in this mystery!**

## Psalm 23

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sheep well and now he must come to know his people, their ways, their needs and their concerns. This problem gave him a new awareness of what God, the true shepherd, is like in his relationship to his people.

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**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
In verdant pastures, he gives me repose,  
Beside restful waters, he leads me,  
He refreshes my soul.**

### **1 Peter 2:20-25**

In this excerpt, Peter recalls the image of the suffering servant of God from Isaiah 53, which came to life in Jesus. He was without sin, yet he was insulted, and he suffered. But he accepted the insults and the suffering for the sins of mankind. Peter says, Jesus gave us the “pattern” which we must follow. If we must suffer insult and injury, we have only to go through what he has already gone through.

**So, suffer patiently whatever comes your way.**

Peter recalls again one of the oldest images of God as “shepherd” of the souls of men. At the time of Jesus, the sheep had to graze in the narrow central plateau without protecting walls, where grass was sparse. The shepherd had to be ceaseless and sleeplessly on the watch to protect the sheep from harm. This image of the shepherd reveals the unfailing vigilance and self-sacrificing love of God for us. Peter also uses the image of God as “guardian” of our souls. The word “guardian”, “Episkopos” in Greek, was a noble word meaning, protector, guide, director, overseer, administrator and guardian. God is presented as the shepherd and guardian of our souls.

**In his love, he cares for us; in his power he protects us; in his wisdom he guides us in the right way.**

### **John 10:1-10**

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unfailing vigilance and self-sacrificing love of God for us in Jesus. Jesus is presented as this shepherd, a caring, listening, sensitive and self-sacrificing leader.

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**Saint of the Day, April 26 - St. Pedro de San José de Betancur and 11 others are remembered this day.**

Betancourt was born at Vilaflor on the Island of Tenerife in 1626. As a small child, he worked as a shepherd, caring for his family's small flock, their only source of income, but also spending some time praying in a small cave in the arid region near the present-day town of El Médano. When the father's estate was seized by a moneylender in 1638 for failure to pay the family's debt, Peter was bound to his service in return for the monies still due him. During this period, his eldest brother, Mateo, migrated to Spain's colonies in the New World, possibly settling in Ecuador.

In 1649, at age 23, Betancourt was freed from his period of servitude and decided to follow his brother's example. He set sail for Guatemala, the capital of New Spain, in hopes of connecting with a relative engaged in government service there. By the time he had reached Havana, Cuba, he was out of money. He then spent a year serving a priest there who was also from Tenerife. He had to pay for his passage from that point by working on a ship which docked at Honduras from where he walked to Antigua Guatemala. When he arrived in La Antigua Guatemala, he was so destitute that he joined the bread line which the Franciscan friars had established to feed the poor. Eventually he found his uncle who then found him a job in a local textile factory.

In 1653 Betancourt enrolled in the Jesuit College of San Borgia to study for priesthood. When after three years he could not master the material, he withdrew from the school and abandoned this idea. After holding the position of sacristan for a while in a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, he rented a house in a suburb of the city called Calvary, and there taught reading and catechism to poor children.

Unable to receive holy orders, Betancourt became a Franciscan tertiary at the Franciscan friary of Costa Rica in Antigua Guatemala and adopted the religious name of Peter of Saint Joseph. He

visited hospitals, jails, the unemployed and worked with the young. In 1658 Peter was given a hut which he converted into a hospital for the poor who had been discharged from the city hospital but still needed to convalesce. His zeal elicited benefactions from those around him and the bishop and governor supplied him with all the conveniences he required.

Three years later several individuals provided for the purchase of the houses surrounding the one Peter then occupied and on their site was erected a hospital in which he could better work. He himself worked with the masons. The hospital was thoroughly equipped and stocked. The institution, a hospital for the convalescent poor, was placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Bethlehem. Soon after there was a shelter for the homeless, a school for the poor, an oratory, and an inn for priests.

Not wanting to neglect the rich of Guatemala City, Pedro began walking through their part of town ringing a bell and inviting them to repent. Other men came to share in Pedro's work. Out of this group came the Bethlehemite Congregation, which won papal approval after Pedro's death. A Bethlehemite sisters' community, similarly, founded after Pedro's death, was inspired by his life of prayer and compassion.

He is sometimes credited with originating the Christmas Eve posadas procession in which people representing Mary and Joseph seek a night's lodging from their neighbors. The custom soon spread to Mexico and other Central American countries. Pedro died in 1667 and was canonized by Pope John Paul II in Guatemala City on July 30, 2002.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**The closer we are to the shepherd, the safer we are from the wolves.**

