

4th Sunday of Easter B

*Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders,
but which has proved to be the keystone.
This is the only one by which we can be saved.
(cf. Ac 4:11.12)*



First Reading

Acts 4:8-12

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed them, "Rulers of the people, and elders! If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple, and asking us how he was healed, then I am glad to tell you all, and would indeed be glad to tell the whole people of Israel, that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the one you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man is able to stand up perfectly healthy, here in your presence, today. This is the stone rejected by you the builders, but which has proved to be the keystone. For of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved."

Second Reading

1 John 3:1-2

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is, that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is.

Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep. And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father."

Meditation

Jesus' claim to be the true shepherd, the only pastor, has nothing idyllic about it. It completes his break with the mercenary religious leaders in whose eyes the sheep matter little. "I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest, says the Lord God. The lost I will seek out, the strayed I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal, shepherding them rightly." (Ezk 34:15-16). This is God's way of acting, and the way of Christ, who gave his life for those the Father entrusted to him. Many do not appreciate being compared to a flock of sheep. Nevertheless, the image of the sheep suggests clearly what we are: defenceless before the ravaging wolf. Of all creatures, sheep possess the weakest sense of direction. So they entrust themselves by instinct to their shepherd to defend and guide them.