



Bringing Home the Word



Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2015

An Incredible Model to Follow, an Incredible Loving Lord

By Janel Esker

Have you ever worked for a boss who's just "in it for the money"? Perhaps he never puts in a minute beyond the absolute minimum hours. Maybe she doesn't invest any time in you—never asks how your weekend was or how your family is doing. It's rarely enjoyable to work for someone like that. It can be difficult to feel motivated to do quality work when your leader isn't invested in you or the value of your work.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, Jesus

is upheld as a model leader. He contrasts himself with a hired man who works only for pay and doesn't concern himself with the flock. We hear repeatedly, though, that Jesus is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. There's a genuine investment, a deep connection, an intimate relationship between Jesus as leader and his beloved sheep.

This is more than just supervisor and supervisee, more than just a hired watcher of sheep and some random animals. The intimacy between Jesus and his people is profound.

We hear this intimacy echoed in today's second reading when John reminds us that we are God's children. God, who is so powerful and so almighty, has drawn us into such a loving relationship as to name us his children.

How does Jesus's deep love for us affect our lives? It's difficult to want to do good work for a leader who isn't invested in you, but we are led by an incredibly loving Lord—do we live our lives aware of this love? Are we willing to be transformed every day into more loving people because of how much God loves us?

It's not an easy call, but we have an incredible model to follow—a truly Good Shepherd. †

REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

ONE? TWO?
REFLECTION

- How can I be a better role model in my community?
- What is my vision of life?


PRAYER

Risen Lord, you are
the Good Shepherd
who watches over us
and protects us from
all harm. Give me the
courage to be a loving
shepherd and advocate
for the poor and
vulnerable.

Sunday Readings

Acts of the Apostles 4:8–12

He is the stone rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. There is no any other name under heaven by which we are to be saved.

1 John 3:1–2

See what love the Father has for us that we may be called the children of God.

John 10:11–18

I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep and they know me and hear my voice and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Living a Balanced Life

By William Rabor, ACSW

A balanced life suggests the various elements of our life—the spiritual, psychological, physical, financial, and social—are relatively stable and in harmony with one another. It suggests that we are not overly focused on one aspect of our life to the detriment of others. And it suggests a certain sense of peace and serenity. To some, being in balance means they are at peace with God, with others, and with themselves.

Balance, like happiness, tends to be a byproduct of the choices we make. It is more likely to be associated with good choices than poor choices. Jack is a clinical psychologist and a therapist. For years he has worked with people whose poor choices have led to imbalance in their lives. He has learned that anything and anyone can become unbalanced. Jack believes people enter therapy not because they are mentally unstable, but usually because their decision-making causes their equilibrium to be compromised.

We know, for example, that biological or genetic factors can influence the loss of balance. These factors cause illnesses such as anxiety and depression, bipolar disorder, or obsessive-compulsive disorder. There are other factors as well, such as the lack of nurturing for a child. A poorly nurtured or abused child may struggle throughout life with a lack of balance in his or her relationships, making bad choices over and over again. Therapy can help break that vicious cycle.

Often the cause is stress, the daily wear and tear of living. Most of us handle it adequately, but sometimes the stressor is



so powerful—a death, major illness, or personal loss—that it creates an imbalance in even the most balanced person.

When it comes to living a balanced life, Jesus is our model. He lived a life of balance, steadiness, and poise. Yet we are told in the Letter to the Hebrews that he was tempted in every way we are but did not sin. That means he struggled with issues of balance like we all do but did not succumb to extremes in his behavior.

How did he achieve personal equilibrium? The Scriptures provide insights.

First, his relationship with God the Father was totally sacred to him, and he safeguarded it at all costs. It was crucial to him to be able to say, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (John 14:11). In other words, Jesus knew who he was, and the unity he shared with the Father gave him a special identity as well as a special stability. It centered him completely.

Second, Jesus nurtured the

relationship through prayer. He loved to pray, and prayer became like food for him. He never made a major decision without first praying all night about it. Prayer provided him with the strength to do whatever had to be done, even to the point of choosing death on a cross.

Third, he knew how to balance solitude with the company of others. He spent a great deal of time forming and shaping his community of disciples to carry on his work. Jesus refused to be a loner or to do the Father’s work all by himself. By calling others to share in his ministry, he avoided burnout, and by sharing in community, he was able to give and receive love—something essential for all of humanity.

Fourth, he set his own expectations rather than letting others set them for him. In Mark’s Gospel when huge crowds sought him out, he got into a fishing boat to avoid being overwhelmed. He resisted the temptation to become the kind of messiah people were expecting, that is to say, a powerful and political one, and instead became a messiah who was also a suffering servant. Jesus defined himself and his ministry in his own way, and he kept his unique mission clearly in focus.

Finally, in Mark’s Gospel the first words our Lord speaks as he begins his public ministry are, “Repent, and believe in the gospel.” Jesus called people to reform, to a change of heart, which is to say, to conversion. When we sin, we are missing our union with God. Walking closely with God keeps us in balance. When our relationship with God is sound, life is better, richer, more fulfilling, and more joyous.

WEEKDAY READINGS April 27–May 2

Mon.	Easter Weekday, Acts 11:1–18 / John 10:1–10	25 / John 13:16–20
Tues.	Easter Weekday (St. Peter Chanel, Priest and Martyr; St. Louis Grignion de Montfort, Priest), Acts 11:19–26 / John 10:22–30	Fri. Easter Weekday (St. Joseph the Worker), Acts 13:26–33 / John 14:1–6 or, for the Memorial, Genesis 1:26–2:3 or Colossians 3:14–15, 17, 23–24 / Matthew 13:54–58*
Wed.	Memorial of Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church, Acts 12:24–13:5a / John 12:44–50	Sat. Memorial of St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church, Acts 13:44–52 / John 14:7–14 (284)
Thurs.	Easter Weekday (St. Pius V, Pope), Acts 13:13–	

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