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Meditations: Monday of the Fourth Week of Easter

Some reflections that can assist our prayer during this season of Easter.

04/22/2024

- Christ is our door
- The good shepherd calls us one by one
- Listening to Jesus in the Church

I AM the door of the sheep (Jn 10:7).
Jesus calls himself the door through which the shepherds and flock must

pass. He warns us against some who try to climb into the sheepfold by other ways and who are not good shepherds. Only by passing through Christ, the door, can the sheep walk safely and find pasture, life in abundance. Jesus is at the center of our faith. He is the beginning and end of creation, the alpha and omega, as the priest proclaims when lighting the candle at the Easter Vigil. “Stir up the fire of your faith,” Saint Josemaría urged. “Christ is not a figure who has passed. He is not a memory lost in history. He lives! *Jesus Christus heri et hodie, ipse et in sæcula*, says Saint Paul. Jesus Christ yesterday and today and forever!”^[1] —

How strongly the figure of Jesus remained engraved on the hearts of those who came into contact with Him! Saint Peter and Saint John, after the cure of the man crippled from birth and the warning from the Sanhedrin never to speak in the

future about the risen Christ, simply reply: *We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20)*. Saint Paul, who met Jesus on the way to Damascus, saw Him as his own life (cf. *Phil 1:21*); his greatest desire was to preach *Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1: 24)*.

When reflecting on the image of Christ as our door, we can consider whether we truly channel everything that happens to us through Him. Our relationship with Jesus involves “a dimension of the Christian experience that perhaps we leave somewhat in the shadows: the spiritual and affective dimension. We should feel connected to our Lord by a special bond, as sheep to their shepherd. At times we rationalize our faith too much and we run the risk of losing the perception of the timbre of that voice, of the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd, which motivates and fascinates. This is

what happened to the two disciples of Emmaus, whose hearts burned as the Risen One spoke along the way. It is the wondrous experience of feeling loved by Jesus. For him we are never strangers.”^[2] —

DURING HIS years of preaching on earth, our Lord was constantly giving light to a multitude of people. Sacred Scripture tells us that those who approached Him were amazed by his way of preaching, so different from what they were used to (cf. *Mk* 1:22). His words offered a new and deep hope, a hope that does not end here on earth, and led the crowds to gather around Him like sheep eager to hear the voice of their shepherd. Christ *calls his own sheep by name* (*Jn* 10:3). He speaks to the heart of each person. In his voice we always recognize a personal call from our

Lord. Faith is authentic when it becomes one's own, when we discover that it guides our deepest desires and sheds light on our daily circumstances, on our family, professional and social relationships. Then we act freely, like the sheep who enter and go out of the sheepfold, with the security given to them by the shepherds (cf. *Jn 10:9*).

When leading the sheep out of the sheepfold, the shepherd *goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice* (*Jn 10:4*). In order to recognize Christ's voice more clearly, we need to go ever deeper into the contents of our faith. Saint Paul compares faith to a shield enabling us to *quench all the flaming darts of the evil one* (*Eph 6:16*). These convictions, when incorporated into our own life with God's grace, sustain us in our struggle. But above all they spur us to bring peace to those around us. Thus, for example, a

person whose life is truly grounded on the truth of being a child of God will be able to face the difficulties of each day with serenity. He or she will know how to treat others better because they are our brothers and sisters, and will view this world of ours as the home that our Father God has given us.

The experience of meeting Christ transforms our life. It does not lead to simply *believing in something*, but rather to *being someone* new, to being Christ for others. Saint Josemaría said that “to be holy, to be happy on earth and to attain eternal happiness – which is what holiness entails – is to be Christ.”^[3]

THE SHEEP in Christ’s fold recognize his voice and reject the voice of strangers (cf. *Jn* 10:5.8). To believe in

Jesus is also to become part of the great community of men and women from a wide variety of conditions and backgrounds who make up the Church. As the Apostle Saint John wrote: *that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 Jn 1:3).*

As we deepen in our knowledge of the faith, we seek to do so especially through the teachings of the Church's Magisterium. This is the door to better appreciate the inheritance our Lord has left us, the family treasure that is transmitted from generation to generation, the voice of the shepherd that never ceases with the passage of time. "As a mother who teaches her children to speak and so to understand and communicate, the Church our Mother teaches us the language of faith in order to

introduce us to the understanding and the life of faith.”^[4] —

Often we have first received this faith in our own home, as happened to Timothy, to whom Saint Paul wrote: *I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you* (2 Tim 1:5). Often “it is the mothers, the grandmothers, who pass on the faith.”^[5] — Passing on the joy of living close to Jesus finds a privileged channel in family members and friends, since it is gratuitous love that expands and transforms a person’s life.

We can ask Jesus, the shepherd, the door of the flock, to help us listen attentively to his voice, a gentle voice that seeks to lead us to happiness, both here and in heaven.

^[1] — Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 584.

[2] Francis, Regina Coeli, 7 May 2017.

[3] Saint Josemaría, Notes from a family gathering, 28 August 1974.

[4] Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 171.

[5] Francis, Homily, 26 January 2015.

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the-fourth-week-of-easter/](https://opusdei.org/en-ie/article/meditations-monday-of-the-fourth-week-of-easter/) (03/31/2025)