

# Fourth Week of Easter

## BLESS OUR TABLE

O God, who gives us food to eat,  
O God who gives us to each other,  
we gather at our table to feed our bodies  
and to feed our spirits.  
Be with us as we are nourished in these ways.

Help us, as we share the food we eat,  
to share each other's laughter and joys,  
to share the story of our day,  
to share our burdens so they become lighter,  
to share your place in our lives,  
so that we are all enriched  
because we gathered around this blessed table  
in your name. Amen.



APRIL 13, 2008  
OUR GUARDIAN

In today's Gospel reading (John 10:1–10) Jesus describes himself as a careful, loving shepherd who watches over his sheep, keeps them safe, and leads them to pasture. During the night a good shepherd stays at the gate guarding the sheep from those who would steal them or kill them. When the sheep of different flocks are gathered together and it is time to separate them, the shepherd calls his sheep by name and leads them out to the pasture. The sheep know his voice. They know they can trust him and he will take care of them if they stay near him.

Jesus was speaking to religious leaders, telling them that he was the true shepherd who knew how to care for the sheep better than they did. They did not understand. But we, the sheep, do understand. Staying near to our Good Shepherd is our job during our lifetime. Each of us follows the Good Shepherd in our own way, for although we may all seem to be alike, God has made each of us different. We stay in touch with Christ, our shepherd, by talking with him regularly in prayer, by taking quiet time to listen to what he wants of us. That's how we hear his voice. How comforting it is to know he is always with us, like the Good Shepherd in the Gospel we hear today.



# This Week at Home

MONDAY, APRIL 14

## THIRST

“My soul thirsts . . . for the living God” says today’s psalm (42:3). Continue your Easter celebration by giving everyone something special to drink with their dinner tonight. Let each person choose a favorite beverage and tell why he or she likes it best. Then let them one at a time talk about a time when they felt truly thirsty for God’s love and how that thirst was satisfied.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

## THE ALTAR

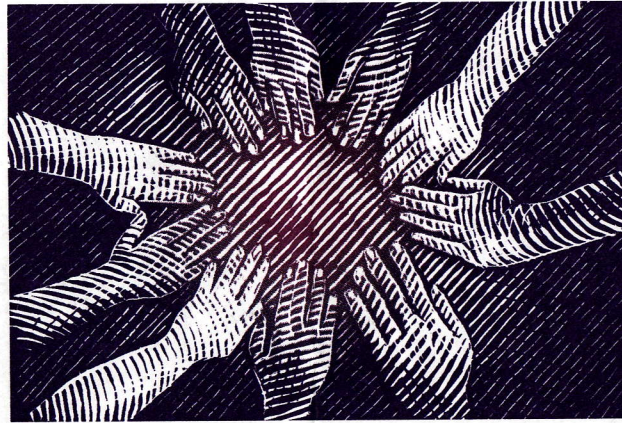
The altar is one of the focal points of our church. On it we celebrate the Eucharist. It is intended to remind us of both the sacrifice of our Lord and the table around which the community is gathered to give thanks. Because the altar represents Christ, we reverence it with a deep bow when we pass before it. During this festive Easter season, flowers decorate the area around the altar. Notice how the altar area at your church is decorated this season. Reverently approach the altar. Take a moment there for prayer.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

## BLESS THESE HANDS

Today’s First Reading, from the Acts of the Apostles (12:24—13:5a), describes how the community laid hands on Saul and Barnabas to bless them before they departed to preach. We often use our hands during the celebration of the sacraments. For example, parents make the sign of the cross on their child who is about to be baptized. Our hands are holy because they are part of our body, the temple of

the Holy Spirit. Look at your own hands. Think of all the good things they do. *O Creator, you have given us hands to do the work of daily life and to serve others. Help us use them well, ever mindful that with them we must do Christ’s work. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.*



THURSDAY, APRIL 17

## BE IN TOUCH

In today’s scripture reading from Acts (13:13–25) we see how Paul, John, and their companions traveled across the sea to extend the family of Christians. Make a list of people in your family who live far away. Send them an encouraging Easter greeting by phone, e-mail, or hand-written note.

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

## FROM FASTING TO FEASTING

Just as Lent was the season of fasting, Easter is the season of feasting. But this does not mean that we eat to excess all during the Fifty Days of the season. To feast is to enjoy, savor, and appreciate something. It may be food, music, art, nature, or our loved ones. We can do this more effectively if we are paying attention to the object of our feast, not mindlessly consuming it. Try feasting on something wonderful—experiencing it with all your senses and thanking our generous God for providing it.

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

## RAISE YOUR VOICE

“O sing to the LORD a new song,” we pray today (Psalm 98:1). The Easter season is a time when we especially use music as a sign of our great joy. Our song is not just music; it is also prayer. Tradition attributes Saint Augustine with the saying that to sing is to pray twice. Our singing is not about the quality of our voice. We sing for God who gave us this voice. By joining in the singing we participate in the prayer of our community. *Thank you, God, for the gift of music to help us honor you and express our love for you.*