

Gospel Reading Group

Third Sunday of Easter (Year A)

John 10:1–10

About today:

The Fourth Sunday of Easter, often known as Good Shepherd Sunday, gathers the Church around the image of Christ as the one who calls, guides, nourishes, and lays down his life for his flock.

In the Gospel (John 10:1–10), Jesus presents himself as both the gate and the shepherd, the one through whom we find safety, belonging, and abundant life. His voice is distinctive, known and trusted by those who truly listen.

This theme is echoed in the first reading (Acts 2:14a, 36–41), where Peter calls the people to recognise Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Those who hear his voice respond with repentance and Baptism, entering into the community of the saved – like sheep gathered into one flock.

The second reading (1 Peter 2:20b–25) deepens the image by portraying Christ as the suffering servant who bears our sins and leads us back to God. “You had gone astray like sheep,” we are told, “but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.”

Together, these readings invite us to reflect on our attentiveness to Christ’s voice, our belonging within his flock, and the trust required to follow where he leads.

Gospel Reading

Read the whole passage slowly a few times, keeping one or two minutes of silence between each time.

^{10:1} “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit.

2 The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

3 The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.

5 They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.”

6 Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

7 So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

8 All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.

9 I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Broader Picture:

John 10 does not begin a new, disconnected teaching. It is a direct continuation of the story of the man born blind in John 9.

Having been cast out by the religious authorities, the healed man becomes a living example of the true “sheep” who hears and follows Christ’s voice, while those who exclude him (the Pharisees) are implicitly revealed as false shepherds.

In this light, Jesus’ imagery of shepherd and gate is not abstract but deeply confrontational: he is fulfilling the promise of passages like Ezekiel 34, where God condemns failed leaders and declares that he himself will come to shepherd his people. The passage therefore defines true belonging: not by external structures alone, but by a living relationship with Christ, the one whose voice is recognised by those who are truly his.

At the same time, this teaching opens into the wider theological horizon of John’s Gospel. The overlapping images of gate and shepherd express that Christ is not only the guide of the flock but also the very way into life and the source of its nourishment. This anticipates both the Cross (where the shepherd lays down his life) and the sacramental life of the Church (where that self-gift becomes present in the Eucharist and sustaining).

Interpretation Notes:

v.1: “...Anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate...” The “sheepfold” is understood as the people of God – Israel fulfilled in the Church – and the “gate” as Christ himself.

The verse can be interpreted as a strong warning about ministry, or the reasons for pursuing a vocation, within the Church. Saint Augustine of Hippo notes, “He enters by the door who enters by Christ... he who seeks his own glory, not Christ’s, climbs up another way.” (Tractates on the Gospel of John, 45.5). This idea carries on in the next verse.

v.2: “...he one who enters by the gate is the shepherd...” The shepherd is the Lord Jesus, as he will plainly state later in v. 11, so the other shepherds who work “under him” must enter the sheepfold like any other sheep (through Christ, and in the way laid out by him). More than that, they need to conform themselves to the character of Christ himself.

Saint Gregory the Great connects this to pastoral care: “He enters by the door who imitates the humility and passion of the Lord.” (Homilies on the Gospels, 14)

vv. 3-4: “...He calls his own sheep by name...” The shepherd speaks, calls by name, and lead. The sheep, on their part, listen to his voice and follow him. These verses portray a close, personal relationship between the Christ the shepherd and his flock, which brings to fulfilment the vision of Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

he leads me beside still waters ...

He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. (Ps 23:1-3)

v.5: “...they will not follow a stranger...” Genuine discipleship, true following requires the sheep to know the voice of the shepherd among all the other possible voices. Though the verse seems pretty matter-of-fact about it, the Church Fathers assume that formation and attentiveness are required to recognise Christ’s voice. This is achieved through prayer and spending time with Jesus. St Gregory adds this pastoral warning:

“Often those who ought to follow Christ follow strangers, because they attend to earthly desires.” (Homilies on the Gospels, 14)

v.6: “...they did not understand...” The metaphors and the figures of speech used by Jesus in this passage overlap and could lead to some confusion. The reaction of the people around Jesus then (and now) is understandable.

The attentiveness we exercise in approaching his words helps to form in us true discernment about the voice of Christ the shepherd.

v.7: “...I am the gate for the sheep.” Jesus simplifies the use of metaphors and plainly identifies himself as the only way into the sheepfold of the Church. But how is Jesus the gate? St Augustine notes, “Jesus is the door... because through him we enter to salvation” (Tractates on John, 45.9).

v.8: “...All who came before me...” This is not a critique of the prophets. Jesus speaks of impostors. “All” refers to false claimants who deceived people by identifying themselves as the Messiah. Furthermore, this critique is also addressed to the religious establishment of the time – the Pharisees and, more broadly, Jesus’ opponents do not belong to the flock of Christ.

v.9: “...Whoever enters by me will be saved...” To enter via Jesus is to submit to him, to place our faith wholly in him, and let the work of Grace conform ourselves to him in our individual circumstances.

The idea of going in and coming out paints the Church (as a community and as the institution) as our sheepfold-home – we enter it via Christ and from there we go about our daily lives, only to return there for nourishment and shelter.

v.9: “...will come in and go out and find pasture.” The “pasture” is not merely teaching or moral guidance received in the sheepfold. It refers to nourishment and to our participation in divine life, already begun sacramentally through the Eucharist as the pledge of eternal (abundant) life.

v.10: “...have it abundantly.” “Abundance” is not material excess or the promise of personal fulfilment in this life, but it refers to participation in divine life.

Though not as a commentary on this verse, Saint Irenaeus notes, “*The glory of God is a living human being; and the life of the human consists in beholding God.*” (Against Heresies, IV.20.7). And indeed, abundant life can be interpreted as the life of grace here, carrying on into the unclouded vision of God in heaven.

Questions for this week:

- *“They will not follow a stranger ... because they do not know the voice of strangers.*
What “strangers” or false shepherds do I find myself tempted to follow (e.g. fear, success, control, approval)?
- *“I am the gate.”*
What does it mean for me to enter through him in daily life?
- *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”*
What do I think “life in abundance” looks like and how does that compare with what Christ offers?
- *“Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.”*
When I approach the altar, do I see it as a place of pasture, where the Shepherd feeds me with himself?



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Interpretation Notes by Father Diego Galanzino for the *Gospel Reading Group* – A discipleship group of the Parish of All Saints' Houghton Regis, April 2026. allsaintshr.co.uk/learning