

SUNDAY PLUS



Chosen and called

A Year of the Word

Called to be a gatekeeper



by Catherine Pepinster

The Gospels are full of imagery of the shepherd and his sheep. Jesus lived in a time when many people made their living through the land. Shepherds were some of the lowliest people in society; it must have seemed strange that he chose this metaphorical language. Yet it is particularly successful because of its vividness and that vividness

remains; we continue to see in our day the relationship between shepherds and their sheep.

In choosing this imagery, Jesus is emphasising that he wants his followers also to be engaged in relationship with him. That relationship is based on us giving him our total trust, just as the sheep trust the shepherd. They follow him because they know his voice. The Gospel today makes us pause to ask:

do we know the Lord's voice? Have we listened so that we have grown to know it and to understand it is a voice we can always trust?

There are others who are familiar in this story too: thieves and robbers. We need to be more wary of other siren voices that we hear and might lead us astray.

But there is someone else too: the gatekeeper who opens the gate so that the shepherd can

pass through. We are being called to follow the Lord but perhaps there are times when we might be gatekeepers, when we have an opportunity, through the way we live and the way we treat others, to be a gatekeeper for Christ so that others also learn to trust God.

Catherine Pepinster is a former editor of *The Tablet* and the author of *The Keys and the Kingdom – the British and the papacy from John Paul II to Francis*, published by T&T Clark.

Called to mission

by Stephen Davies

The word "vocation" can fill me with dread. What is my vocation? Have I made the right choice? Am I succeeding in it? Yet everyone's God-given vocation is the same: to be the person God calls us to be; the best "me" I can be.

To do this, I have to enter through "the gate of the sheepfold" – the phrase Jesus uses to describe himself in today's Gospel. By following Jesus we have our guide and support. Once inside the sheep pen, I sometimes want to get some straw and make myself a nice place to curl up and rest. But this is not the "life to the full" to which Jesus is leading us.

If I have experienced God's love through my relationship with Jesus, how can I not want to share that with others? I have a mission:

to get out of the comfort and let others know, through my actions and choices, about God's love. Our mission as lay people is summed up by St Oscar Romero: "You parents, teachers, workers, labourers... transform the world by bringing to it the presence of God that you carry in your heart."

Stephen Davies is the Red Box Director for Missio, the Catholic Church's official charity for overseas mission, www.missio.org.uk

Loving Lord, when I watch sheepdogs guiding a flock into its pen, at least one sheep invariably seems to escape and needs to be rounded up again. Where do I fit into the picture? Help me to hear and follow your voice. Keep me close to you. Amen.

Chosen and loved

by Dr Lawrence Osborn

It was the day of Pentecost. Peter found himself explaining the apostles' behaviour to an incredulous crowd and the people responded. Peter's words had become God's words to them.

Whenever we hear the words of scripture, God is calling us. Sometimes those words are disturbing: they force us to say with Peter's crowd, "What must we do?" Sometimes they are challenging: they tell us only too plainly what we must do, for example, to "die to our sins and live for uprightness" (1 Peter 2:24). With the challenge, there also comes a promise: Christ's victory on the cross enables us to meet the challenge. Sometimes they are reassuring: in today's

Gospel, Jesus promises us a place of safety and nurture.

But whether the words we hear disturb, challenge, or reassure us, they are always words of love. After all, they are addressed to us by the God who is love.

Dr Lawrence Osborn is an Orthodox layman living in Glasgow.

"You can do so many things, so many works, even works of mercy, you can do many great things for the Church — a Catholic university, a college, a hospital... and they might even build a monument to you as a benefactor of the Church, but if you do not pray then none of this will bring light."

Pope Francis

Today:
Acts 2:14, 36-41
1 Peter 2:20-25
John 10:1-10

Monday:
Acts 11:1-18
John 10:11-18

Monday (E):
The English Martyrs
(Feast): Acts 7:55-60;
Matthew 10:17-20

Tuesday:
Acts 11:19-26
John 10:22-30

Wednesday:
Acts 12:24 – 13:5
John 12:44-50

Thursday:
Acts 13:13-25
John 13:16-20

Friday:
Acts 13:26-33
John 14:1-6

Saturday:
Acts 13:44-52
John 14:7-14

Next Sunday:
Acts 6:1-7
1 Peter 2:4-9
John 14:1-12