

*Below are a few reflections which offer these Sunday Scriptures as a source of inspiration, guidance, and challenge for all believers **in this time of economic hardship** for many. Use any part of or all these thoughts as you see fit. Several of the ideas are taken from reflections on "Being Catholic in a Time of Economic Crisis"*

## Homily Ideas for

### Fourth Sunday of Easter near the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker (B)

From the reading from the Acts: "...it was in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean ... this man stands before you healed."

From Psalm 118: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD."

From the reading from 1 John: "Beloved, we are God's children now;"

From the Gospel by John: Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

In this time of uncertainty and economic insecurity, what are you feeling? Many people report feeling overwhelmed and powerless, fearful, frustrated, and resentful. Whatever emotions you are experiencing, how are you dealing with them?

*Consider using the following true story or use something from your own experience.*

One man spoke at a retreat and talked about how as a small-business owner seeing his revenue decreasing he had become overly anxious and more and more self absorbed. After Mass one Sunday he and his wife followed their usual custom and went to breakfast. His wife commented that possibly both of them were not allowing their faith to be a stronger influence in their life, especially in their attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. Together they recognized that there was a genuine financial concern. However, they needed to focus on the blessings they had, be proactive about what they could do, and find their deepest sense of self-worth, security, and success in genuinely living as faith-filled Christians. They also became aware that they were too wrapped up in themselves and their concerns. What struck them both was that many individuals and families were hurting much more than they were. Instead of saying, "There but for the grace of God go I," they chose to get involved in outreach to individuals who had experienced job loss.

This couple's response reiterates part of the past Christmas Day message of Pope Benedict XVI. In urging a spirit of solidarity, the Holy Father said: "If people look only to their own interests, our world will certainly fall apart." Our United States bishops also issued a short statement on the economic crisis during their fall meeting. They said, "This disturbing and complicated situation brings home a universal truth: we are all children of God. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We are all in this together. Hard times can isolate us or they can bring us together. The Catholic community will continue to reach out to those in need, stand with those

who are hurt, and work for policies that bring greater compassion, accountability and justice to economic life."

In December 2008 the Ohio bishops added their voice to the current economic realities. They stated, "Ultimately, the economy is not just about money; it is about us as people, fellow human being made in the image and likeness of God. Any economic recovery plan should seek to help all people, especially the poor and vulnerable, survive these difficult times.

As a universal Catholic and caring community, we celebrated the feast of St. Joseph the Worker this past Friday, May 1. We know very little about him. We do know that he was a just man, a conscientious carpenter, a loving husband to Mary and a concerned foster father to Jesus. Throughout the difficult circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth and upbringing, he trusted God as his guide and as the foundation for his family life. His family and work life were influenced by his awareness of God's presence in the midst of everyday ordinary activities. He was a man living not for himself, but for others.

Today's reading from the first letter of St. John encourages us to remember in good times and in bad that we are all God's children -- called to find in God our anchor, our hope, our eternal security. The Gospel proclaims that Jesus is the good shepherd giving his life for us not only on Calvary, not only in our Eucharistic sacrifice, but also in the difficult situations we face daily. He is the shepherd who has not and never will abandon us.

We are challenged not only to worship Jesus as our Good Shepherd but to follow his example -- to shepherd, guide, encourage, and generously share ourselves with others who may need our compassionate attention. The current crisis presents an opportunity for us as Catholic Christians to be instruments of hope and agents of change within our parishes and the broader society. More than ever we are called to open our hearts and minds to those in need; to offer counseling and practical advice to those who've lost their jobs or their homes, to inspire actions that promote the common good of all.

This global economic meltdown is a wake-up call for the whole world. Regardless of the billions of dollars to be spent on recovery efforts and the tax cuts that will be enacted, this crisis cannot and will not be resolved by Washington policy alone. As people of faith we need to reflect upon what has been lacking in our moral and spiritual foundation as a nation and as a world. Perhaps, it is a call to live more simply. Perhaps, it is a time to think more critically about how our trade and foreign policies impact global markets and to let legislators know our thoughts. Perhaps it is a time for greater corporate responsibility and ethics in business. Perhaps it is time for us to volunteer with a local agency or to become better informed about legislation and public policies and seek to influence them for the common good.

Certainly it is a time for us as Christians to find a deeper security and a more active compassion for others flowing from our daily relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate good shepherd of the entire human family, and he asks us to continue to do his work in our world.

*(This weekend you may also choose to use the St. Joseph the Worker Pledge and/or the St. Joseph prayer.)*

*Submitted by Fr. Norm Douglas*