

In this week's Gospel (John 10:1-10) our Lord tells us why He came into this world: "I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly." In order to convey this message, Jesus employs a metaphor about sheep and how they are led to pasture by their shepherd. In order for the sheep to flourish they need two things: 1) they need to find the gate that leads to the pasture; and 2) they need to hear and recognize the voice of their shepherd who protects them and leads them to the best pastures where they can find the nourishment they need and desire. As we know, the allegory applies to each of us. We are the sheep who desire the abundant life; Jesus is both the gate and the shepherd.



Jesus refers to Himself as the gate because only through Him can we find the full meaning, joy, and peace of life. I believe I can safely say that as a society we are losing sight of the true "Gate" that leads to life. Why? Like the sheep in Jesus' allegory, we need help to find the gate that leads to life. At first sight any gate appears to be restrictive, it is a narrow way, it requires patience to file through a narrow gate. At the same time, it requires an absolute trust in the shepherd in order to believe there is in fact a beautiful pasture on the other side! So it is in life, sometimes it requires patience – a willingness to suffer – to do what is right and thereby attain a deeper, more abundant, meaningful life. Unfortunately, we as human beings tend to resist the restraints of the narrow way and prefer the path of least resistance, even if it means we must ignore the voice of the good shepherd!

Today we hear many voices telling us that we can bypass the narrow gate and find the abundant life through the accumulation of things, money, promiscuity, or fame. At the same time, we hear another voice calling us to enter through a narrow gate that requires restraint, patience, humility and even a willingness to suffer in order to enter

into a more abundant life. How do we poor sheep discern the authentic way to the abundant life?

Jesus is THE GATE! How do we know? We remember what He has done for us. He has taken the narrow way – the way of the Cross – for us. He emptied Himself and offered Himself as a living sacrifice to save us from eternal damnation. He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep! Many others – including doctors, scientists, religious gurus, professors, philosophers, atheists, famous actors, politicians, artists, etc. – give us their opinions about the meaning of life and the way to the abundant life, but we must discern where these voices originate: what have these people done for us? Jesus has proven Himself to be the good shepherd. We can trust Him absolutely when He asks us to follow Him through the narrow gate in order to find the abundant life: Jesus is the Gate! For two thousand years we have witnessed the heroic generosity and love of the Saints who experienced the abundant life promised by Jesus. These are His sheep who hear His voice and will follow none other. May we, by the grace of God, follow their example!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples