

**St. Frances Cabrini - Lebanon, TN**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter – Year C**  
**May 12, 2019**

*Acts 13:14, 43-52*

*Rev 7:9, 14b-17*

*John 10:27-30*

This Sunday is traditionally referred to as “Good Shepherd Sunday”. However, our readings for today focus more on the flock than on the shepherd. The main theme seems to be unity in diversity.

Have you ever wanted to be a part of a group, but wasn’t initially invited? This could be in the form of a sports team, some school club, cheerleading. It could have been a sorority or fraternity. It could be a group at work or some civic type club. What did it feel like when you were waiting to be accepted? If you weren’t accepted, what did it feel like? Did you feel utterly rejected? Now you know how the Gentiles felt when being around the first century Jews.

Let’s take this conversation another way. If you were a part of this group or club, did you ever look down on those trying to get in? Did you ever look down on those trying to get in even if you were rejected on your first or second try? Why? Did you already forget waiting yourself?

We have in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles Paul and Barnabas preaching to the people of Antioch. They are preaching to a community of both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews are upset with Paul and Barnabas’ teaching of Jesus and his resurrection. Paul was Pharisee. He was one of them, except for now believing in Jesus. Paul turns to the Gentiles when the Jews reject his teachings. Within this same story, we have a rejected group excited they are being brought into the flock. On the other side, we have a group still rejecting them.

Both the first and second readings depict communities made up of people from every nation, race, people, and tongue, Jews and Greeks alike. This is precisely the makeup of most communities today. I think we have come along way from earlier times. I remember where I grew up in northern Indiana there was a Hungarian Catholic church on one corner of the block and an Irish Catholic church on the other corner. The same city block. Part of this was language. I would also say they were not the best of friends either.

Our country is truly a melting pot of diversity. People of every country, religion, background make up our population. Yet in our own history, we didn't embrace the diversity. Certain ethnic groups were frowned upon. I do think progress was made.

Let's fast forward to today. I am not sure we are as tolerant as we ought to be. The rhetoric is quite high more than ever. I am familiar with an individual who looks down on us Catholics. Yet he wants to make sure we believe as he does. Our teachings are good for some of the social challenges the world faces. Yet our desire not to judge is less than tolerable.

I am not naive to believe we Catholics don't judge too. I have been around so many who do. When I am honest with myself, I judge too. We don't celebrate the diversity. We would rather find something wrong with it. We look at the glass half empty.

We have diversity in our own church. One third of our population is Hispanic. We have a variety of age, ethnic background, social economic background. How often within this parish do we judge? How often in this parish do we complain about the diversity?

We should not complain about the diversity. We should indeed celebrate this. We have an opportunity to become a community of unity. The early Church was just that, a community of unity, welcoming all. This is God's kingdom at hand. Let us reflect on our behavior. Let us remember what it felt like being shunned, unwelcomed. Let us also remember the joy of being welcomed. Let us move forward with arms outstretched to welcome those who may not be exactly like us. Let us strive to be a community of unity.