Cross is the one word that describes quite dynamically the transition of Good Friday to Easter Sunday. When one sees the cross, one will always recall the cross planted at the heart of Mt. Calvary, from which hung this Jesus bathed in his sweat and blood. Our Christian faith points to that almost all the time, but it tells us in the same way that our faith does not end there. Jesus did not end his journey, his mission there. So, ours, too. Jesus reminds us not only of the cross but also to cross—to cross from fear to courage, from doubt to faith, from sin to grace, and from death to life. The Fourth Sunday of Easter, which is dedicated to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, teaches us how to get there.

The Responsorial Psalm sings the famous canticle of the Good Shepherd. The one quality visible to that of the shepherd is that he leads. His leading is not scattering; it is, that of the shepherd is that he leads. We have now returned to the shepherd whom God made Lord and Christ, delivers a speech about Jesus, and guardian of your souls.”

In the First Reading, St. Peter assures us in the Second Reading, though: “For you have gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.”

In the First Reading, St. Peter delivers a speech about Jesus, whom God made Lord and Christ, which in effect, cuts the hearts of the listeners. And they begin asking, “What are we to do, my brothers?” The same question reflects our way of thinking, too. How can we get across to God’s side again? Peter lays down the criteria: Repent and be baptized. Repentance is a movement not only of location (from sin) but also to a person, Jesus Christ himself. Only through Jesus that one enters, through Baptism, the gate to all other sacraments.

The imagery of gate recurs in the Gospel reading today. Technically speaking, the gate is a demarcation line, which symbolizes both a separation and an access to territories, lands, and properties. To enter the gate, one needs to secure permission from the owner. Jesus repeatedly refers to himself as the “gate of the sheep from which one will come in and go out and find pasture… to have life and have it more abundantly.” Indeed, with Jesus, the demarcation line between humanity and God disappears. Consequently, relationship is renewed and freedom is restored. The gate refers to Jesus’ love for us. He desires us to cross to the Father even to the point of carrying our own crosses. The challenge for us now is to become the gate for others to cross to the other side where joy, love, and happiness exist altogether. Yet in our daily lives, how many times would we rather become the cross than a way for others to cross to God’s side?

— Fr. Dindo Purto, SSP

Exploring Interreligious Dialogue
Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

A popular expression to capture all the attitudes and initiatives among the various religions is termed “interreligious dialogue.” A similar term, perhaps more accurate, is “interfaith dialogue.” All these efforts to build fraternal relationships and foster communication are anchored in people’s faith. Though their religions differ in many aspects, it is still proper to call these people “believers,” since their lives and values are “God-centered.” Thus, authentic dialogue is much more than tactics or strategies for community management or the resolution of social tensions and problems.

Interfaith dialogue moves beyond discussion (“dialogue”) about religious beliefs and practices; it is not focused on a comparative study of religions. Beyond mere windy words, dialogue means entering another’s experience of God; it demands a growth in faith and a conversion to a deeper religious encounter with one’s God.

Thus, dialogue is always “faith-based,” and from this perspective people will more readily collaborate to address social questions, authentic human development, and the freedom of religious practice. As Catholics following the teachings of Vatican II, we all need to grow in our appreciation of our neighbor’s authentic faith.
Entrance Antiphon
(Cf. Ps 33 [32]:5–6)
(Recited when there is no opening song.)

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here.)
P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Penitential Act
P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Pause)
P — You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.
P — You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.
P — You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.
P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading
(Acts 2:14a, 36–41) (Sit)
Peter, the leader of the apostles, proclaims to the people that Jesus who was crucified is risen from the dead and is proclaimed by God as Lord and Messiah.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

THEN PETER stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed: “Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, “What are we to do, my brothers?” Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.” He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand persons were added that day.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 23)
R — The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he leads me; he refreshes my soul. (R)

2. He guides me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side, with your rod and your staff that give me courage. (R)

3. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (R)

4. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come. (R)

Second Reading
(1 Pt 2:20b–25)
Jesus bore our sins on the cross, suffering for us sinners. He is the Shepherd who gave his life for us. In turn, we should come back to him to receive healing.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Peter
BELOVED: If you are patient when you suffer for doing what is good, this is a grace before God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.
When he was insulted, he returned no insult; when he suffered, he did not threaten; instead, he handed himself over to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body upon the cross, so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you had gone astray like sheep, but you have now returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

— The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Jn 10:14) (Stand)
All — Alleluia, alleluia. I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Jn 10:1–10)
P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS said: “Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber. But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice, as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.” Although Jesus used this figure of speech, the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy, I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

— The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)
All — I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, (At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — Let us pray to the Father that he may take care of us and raise up good shepherds to tend the people of God. Let us pray:
R — Lord, listen to your people.
C — May our Holy Father Francis and Church leaders continue to be true shepherds leading their flocks to good pastures. We pray: (R)

P — Lord, listen to your people.
C — May our Holy Father and Church leaders continue to be true shepherds leading their flocks to good pastures. We pray: (R)

P — Lord, listen to your people.
C — May young people, following the good examples of their elders, take their place in society with a sense of responsibility, service, and respect for the dignity of each person. We pray: (R)

C — Today, World Day of Prayer for Vocations, we pray that there be more young men and women who respond to God’s call to the priesthood and consecrated life, and give themselves totally to the cause of the Kingdom. We pray: (R)

C — May those who are sick and at the moment of death receive the comfort of the Lord, so that they may not fear but hold on to the Good Shepherd who died to give life to all of us. We pray: (R)

C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause). We pray: (R)

P — Father, grant us the desire to serve our brothers and sisters, so that when, our chief Shepherd, appear, we shall receive the unfading crown of glory.
We ask this of you who live and reign for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

Presentation of the Gifts

(Stand)
P — Pray, brethren…
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — Grant, we pray, O Lord, that we may always find delight in these paschal mysteries, so that the renewal constantly at work within us may be the cause of our unending joy.
Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface IV of Easter

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, at all times to acclaim you, O Lord, but in this time above all to laud you yet more gloriously, when Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.

For, with the old order destroyed, a universe cast down is renewed, and integrity of life is restored to us in Christ.

Therefore, overcome with paschal joy, every land, every people exult in your praise and even the heavenly Powers, with angelic hosts, sing together the unending hymn of your glory, as they acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Knee)

Acclamation (Stand)
All — We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

All — Our Father…
P — Deliver us, Lord…
All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to PEace

Invitation to Communion (Knee)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)
Look upon your flock, kind Shepherd, and be pleased to settle in eternal pastures the sheep you have redeemed by the Precious Blood of your Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)
Keep your family safe, O Lord, we pray, and grant them the abundance of your mercies, that they may find growth through the teachings and the gifts of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit come down on you and remain with you for ever.
All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go forth, the Mass is ended.
All — Thanks be to God.