

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (5/2-3/2009)

*Acts 4/8-12, Psalm 118, 1 John 3/1-2, John 10/11-18*

Spring is always such a special time of year here at the seminary.

The school quarter is coming to a close; the deacons are preparing for ordination; the seminarians are beginning to breathe a sigh of relief.

Everything is in bloom, and summer is on the way.

In that light, the Scripture readings today seem to have a particularly upbeat note to them.

In the first reading from *Acts*, Peter, the one-time scared and cowardly apostle, stands before his accusers and preaches to them about the primacy of Jesus, risen from the dead.

In the second reading, we are told: "*See what love the Father has bestowed on us, that we may be called the children of God.*"

*1 John* goes on to repeat that happy message, and advises us that, one day, we shall see God as He really is.

If that isn't enough to lift our spirits, the Gospel fills us with the Good News that Jesus is our good shepherd.

In order to derive the most benefit from these positive messages, we have to believe in Jesus.

No, not just acknowledge his presence in our lives, but love him and trust him – no matter what.

That is easier said than done, as we all know.

When we bestow our trust on Jesus, we expect results.

We expect to be rewarded fairly soon once we have declared our trust in the Lord.

More times than not, the Lord is silent in reply.

And that's when it seems to me our trust is really tested – when there is no sign that the Lord has even heard us, let alone indicates interest in granting our requests.

We are asked to trust a silent God, a God whose response will be at His convenience, not ours.

A while back, a young woman turned over a new leaf, sobered up, bought into the Alcoholics Anonymous program, and decided to "let go and let God".

She felt great – until one day a crisis occurred, and she became a basket of nerves on the brink of lapsing back into her best friend, the bottle.

She called her sponsor, went to her meeting and said her prayers to her "Higher Power".

However, the butterflies remained in her stomach, the anxiety gnawed away at her, the temptation to drink got stronger and stronger.

Where was God when she needed Him, whom she was expected to fully trust?

Fortunately, she weathered the storm.

She learned that day that trusting God did not mean she should abandon her own efforts.

We have an old theological saying: "Grace builds on nature."

It means God is at work, but He works with the real person He has formed, not with some fictionalized plaster saint, but with the real me with all my strengths and weaknesses.

What God sees is what God gets and that is whom God works with.

That young woman managed to stay sober because she stayed with her 12-step program, followed the advice and help she received, and hung in there.

Her trust in God really paid off. It always does if done right.