

## May 4, 2020-Monday, Fourth Week of Easter

### Disciple, apostle, the Twelve

What is the difference, if any, among the terms: “Disciple,” “the Twelve,” and “Apostle?”

**Disciple:** This is from a Latin word that means “one who is taught, a learner, the follower of a master.” In the Gospels, the word designates those called specifically by Jesus to follow him, and who actually traveled with him. Some of them were women. It’s not known how many disciples there were. Luke, in his Gospel, speaks of Jesus sending 70 disciples to preach, but it is assumed there were more than this.

Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, is also the first to extend the term “disciple” to refer to Christians who were not with Jesus during his ministry, but who were baptized after his death and resurrection. Today the term is used for all the baptized.

**The Twelve:** From among the “disciples,” Jesus chose a distinct group to become “the Twelve”—symbolizing the 12 tribes of Israel in the new covenant. Their names are listed in three of the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, although there are some variations in the lists.

**Apostle:** This is from a Greek word that means “one who is sent officially” as, for example, an ambassador. In the New Testament, the term does not apply to all the disciples. It does apply to the Twelve, but goes beyond the Twelve—apparently designating those specially “sent.”

Paul, for example, calls himself an apostle. In his letter to the Romans, he also refers to a woman as an apostle: “Greet Andronicus and *Junia*...they are prominent among the apostles.”

*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.*

(John 10:1-2)

This chapter of John’s Gospel uses the image everyone loves—Jesus as the Shepherd, going out to the lost sheep and putting it on his shoulders...the shepherd who gives his life for the sheep...the sheep who know him and he knows them.

The passage for today refers to the gate or door of the sheepfold. The only one who can open the gate and enter the sheepfold is the shepherd.

Everyone has closed doors in their lives. Places inside ourselves where we do not want to go because we are afraid. Behind those doors are things like old hurts, addictions, health concerns, hatred, fears.

Jesus is telling me that he can lead me, one of his flock, through the closed doors in my life to those places where there is trouble so I can deal with it. And then he can lead me out again.

Jesus, my shepherd, is telling me: “Don’t be afraid.”

Spend some quiet time with the Lord