Dear Padre,

VLADA KARPOVICH / PEXELS

Should Christians avoid practicing qi gong or tai chi? Or even meditation in which you empty your mind? Thank you.

This is one of those questions that has been debated for a long time. Social media offers many so-called experts with vastly different opinions. It can be very confusing, particularly if you are looking for a black-and-white answer, a yes or a no.

The pope who provides us with the most helpful direction to answer this question is Pope Benedict XVI. He did not forbid Eastern spiritual practices entirely but warned against their integration into Christian life without proper discernment. His perspective was rooted in a theological understanding that Christian spirituality is a unique path focused on a relationship with Christ. He emphasized that our Catholic spiritual tradition is distinct from the goals and methods of non-Christian traditions. He believed the practice of such non-Christian traditions, without preparation and without awareness of the challenge they present, could lead to spiritual error if not approached with caution and discernment.

So, the answer is nuanced. If you are using the practice as a spiritual practice, you should proceed with the utmost caution. If, on the other hand, you are using these practices for the more common physical or psychological—not spiritual—reasons, then it is permissible.

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
April 27	April 28	April 29	April 30	May 1	May 2	May 3
Easter Weekday	*Easter Weekday*	*St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor of the Church*	*Easter Weekday*	*Easter Weekday*	*St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor of the Church*	*Fifth Sunday of Easter*
Acts 11:1–18	Acts 11:19–26	Acts 12:24—13:5a	Acts 13:13–25	Acts 13:26–33	Acts 13:44–52	Acts 6:1–7
Jn 10:11–18	Jn 10:22–30	Jn 12:44–50	Jn 13:16–20	Jn 14:1–6	Jn 14:7–14	1 Pt 2:4–9
						Jn 14:1–12

MARCO IACOBUCCI EPP / SHUTTERSTOCK

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

Our faith is authentic when it embraces our whole life, when it becomes a criterion for our decisions, when it makes us women and men committed to doing what is right and who take risks out of love, even as Jesus did.... Jesus is the true measure of our faith; he is the gate through which we must pass in order to be saved.

ANGELUS, ROME, AUGUST 24, 2025

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Our Parish COMMUNITY

April 26, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Easter (A)

Acts 2:14a, 36–41 / 1 Peter 2:20b–25 / John 10:1–10

Open Door

MIGUEL DULICK

It is "Good Shepherd Sunday," and the gospel quotes Jesus: "I am the gate for the sheep." It seems the oddest of Jesus' "I am" identities, until you realize that the shepherd himself was often the literal gate of the sheep's pen, as he would lay his own body across the entrance to keep the sheep secure and safe from any predators. Actually, the predators that worry Jesus the most are other shepherds—"strangers" who came before him, all of whom Jesus flatly denounces as "thieves and robbers."

Does that scare us today? Are we vulnerable to attacks, even from those supposedly in charge of our care? When Jesus opens the gate, we go in and out through him, through Jesus, to find pasture. We follow him because we recognize "his voice." In the synodal Church that Pope Francis called us to, and to which we continue to be called by Pope Leo XIV, every voice is welcome and needed so that the Holy Spirit will fill the whole Church with truth.

Here in Honduras, where I live, folks with little education can offer profound witness to the love of God. It comes from their own intimacy with Jesus, recognizing his voice in their daily life. They are often the poor victims of widespread corruption, like "a thief [who] comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy." Here in Honduras, we take refuge in Jesus, that we "might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Reflect

How can we recognize voices that speak the truth? How do we recognize Jesus' voice?

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The Catholic Church in Pocahontas County West Virginia

OUR MISSION
My house shall be called
a house of prayer
for all peoples ...
others will I gather to them
besides those already gathered.
(Isaiah 56:7, NAB-RE)

ST. JOHN NEUMANN PARISH & CHURCH OFFICE, 714 Tenth Avenue, Marlinton WV 24954
ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST MISSION, 92 Catholic Church Road, Rts 250 & 92, Bartow WV 24920
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX CHAPEL, 6332 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe WV 26209
Telephone: St. John Neumann 304-799-6778, St. Bernard of Clairvaux 304-572-0847
Website: PocahontasCatholic.org
E-mail: Pastor@PocahontasCatholic.org

Prayer Requests

Patty Bryant
Margaret Bryant
Ann Burke
Danielle Cade
Matt Madruga
Cynthia Olson
Quinn Riffle
Tristan Sizemore

EUCHARIST THIS WEEK

Monday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Wednesday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Friday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Saturday	6:30 p.m.	St. Bernard
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	St. John
	11:30 a.m.	St. Mark

St. John Neumann Church is open for private prayer every day during daylight.
The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered before each Eucharist or by appointment, and at St. Bernard on Saturdays 4:30-5:00 p.m.
The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is available any time upon request.

Please call the Church office (304-799-6778) if you know of a parishioner who is sick, in the hospital or nursing home, homebound, deployed, or in prison.

To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact WV Child Protective Services at 800-352-6513.
To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact the Diocese at 888-434-6237 or 304-233-0880.
To report suspected cases of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a bishop or eparch, please contact *ReportBishopAbuse.org* or call 800-276-1562.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
"I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."
(John 10:10, NAB-RE)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES

- **St. Bernard Chapel** changes to the summer Mass schedule next Saturday (May 2).

- **C.A.M.P. Wade** (formerly the vicariate camp) is scheduled for June 7-13 this year in Huttonsville. All children aged 7-15 are welcome, and older teens and adults form the all-volunteer staff. Application forms are now available at our Churches. Our Churches in Pocahontas County are the official sponsors of C.A.M.P. Wade.
- **A reminder** to all adults from our parishes who work with children, particularly at religious education, camp or Bible School, that you must be current with safe environment certification. Go to *www.virtus.org* to register or to update your file.
- **Volunteers are invited to read** to residents at Pocahontas Center (nursing home) in Marlinton. This is a new project of local Churches. Please contact Chrissy Hovorka of St. John Neumann for more information.

LAST WEEKEND

	attendance	collection
St. John Neumann	42	$507.00
in the mail		$1,500.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	16	$570.00
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	7	$550.00
Fund for the Poor		$540.00
total	65	$3,667.00

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Catholic Sharing Appeal - 2026

	donors	goal	pledges	% of goal
St. John Neumann & St. Bernard	3	$4,110	$1,120	27%
St Mark the Evangelist	6	$1,750	$1,250	71%

Thank you to all those who have contributed.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - YEAR A

First Reading (Acts 2:14a, 36-41)

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.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b4, 5, 6,
Grail translation, 1963)

Response: The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is over flowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

Second Reading (1 Peter 2:20b-25)

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.

Gospel Acclamation (John 10:14)

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my sheep, and mine know me.

Gospel (John 10:1-10)

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."

Reflection (2020-A)

Jesus says "the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice," and the result, Jesus says, is that "whoever enters through me will be saved." There are so many voices out there in our world today, so many who claim to have the truth, and who beacon us to follow them. In times of crisis, there are also the voices of the conspiracy theories, and they can seem to offer simple explanations, while ignoring the complexity of the situation. Often, those conspiracy theories are a front for partisan political ideologies.

Who do you listen to? What voices to you repeat to others? Who should you listen to? How can a person possibly cut those all the noise and recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus?

Actually, it's quite easy. With so much time on our hands while we remain at home, why not take some of that time to read the Gospels? Why not other parts of the Scripture? Because the Gospels contain the words and actions of Jesus, so it is the best and surest place to listen to the voice of the Lord. And once we've heard that voice, then we can easily judge whether the other voices out there are those of "thieves and robbers" as Jesus calls them, or voices that speak the truth.

Reflection (2021-B)

Inclusiveness or exclusiveness, which do you prefer? If we're excluded, we might campaign for inclusiveness, and if we're included, we might not even have second thoughts about those left out.

When Jesus says "I am the good shepherd,
and I know mine and mine know me," it sounds quite exclusive – only those that are his, will he shepherd. But then immediately he says "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold, these also I must lead." So he is very inclusive.

We too are called to include people. Think of others not as "other" but as those we are called to welcome, into our lives, and into our communities.

Reflection (2023-A)

In the Gospel passage today about the shepherd of the sheep, we hear the words "the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them." So he had to say it again in a more plain way, "A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy." What he was telling them is that they were the thieves, trying to deceive the people, even though they were the religious leaders who were supposed to be teaching the people what is true. But Jesus insisted that his sheep "follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him."

Oh how true it is today as well, there are so many leaders, even religious leaders, deceiving God's people, for reasons of power, maybe money, or even political ideologies. And some are led astray, but those who "recognize his voice" remain faithful.

Reflection (2024-B)

"The stone rejected by the builders" – have you ever felt rejected? Maybe you were the last to be chosen when teams were chosen. Maybe you went for a job interview, and you didn't get an offer. Maybe you had something to say, and others talked over you. Maybe you moved to a new place, and you were reminded that you were not welcome. Being rejected is a common experience.

The danger of rejecting people is that we might be rejecting what is the best: "The stone rejected by the builders has become *the corner stone*." The cornerstone is what everything else is built on. Maybe that rejected player turns out to be the star on another team. Maybe that rejected applicant turns out to be the best worker at another job. Maybe that rejected opinion turns out to be the brilliant idea. Maybe that rejected immigrant turns out to be the future of a different community.

So Jesus doesn't reject anyone. He says "I will lay down my life for the sheep." But he also says "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd." He is the shepherd of all, he doesn't reject anyone.

Reflection (2025-C)

Again the theme of the shepherd appears in the Gospel, and the shepherd is Jesus Christ. A shepherd guides and protects the flock, and the sheep know their shepherd's voice and follow. Jesus knows each one of us, and he doesn't want us to perish, but to have eternal life. Do we listen? Do we follow?

Again the Church has a new shepherd, Pope Leo XIV. His role is to guide and protect each of us, the Church. Each Pope is unique in how he fulfills this ministry, but each Pope is called to guide and protect *each* and *every* person. Do we listen? Do we follow?

Reflection (2026-A)

Often, this fourth Sunday of the Easter season is called Good Shepherd Sunday, because the Gospel is about Jesus, the Good Shepherd, from St. John.

While many in our country do not live in the country, and have no realistic idea of sheep and shepherds, the image Jesus paints is of a good and faithful leader and good and faithful followers. The Pharisees didn't understand, or didn't want to understand, because they were deceptive leaders – like thieves and robbers – and they were trying to deceive those who would follow them.

But the Pharisees could only steal and slaughter and destroy, while Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came "that they might have life and have it more abundantly." What a contrast, a contrast that even today we are faced with: good leaders and bad leaders, and who we follow is our choice.

26 April 2026
Fourth Sunday of Easter - Good Shepherd Sunday - Year A

Penitential Rite

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd, you call us to follow you: Lord, have mercy.
Christ Jesus, True Shepherd, you heal us and strengthen us: Christ, have mercy.
Lord Jesus, Loving Shepherd, you feed us with your body and blood: Lord, have mercy.
May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

Prayer of the Faithful

Almighty Father, you never abandon us, and you are our constant help, and so we come before with our needs:

- for all pastors, for strength in their ministries, we pray
- for civil leaders, that they will learn to serve rather than be served, we pray
- for peace in the Middle East, we pray
- for shepherds and farmers and all those who provide us with food, that they will have the support that they need, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that we will care for those who are poor, those who are vulnerable, and those who are in need, we pray
- for Richard Evan Bennett, and for all those who have died, that they will be saved, we pray
- and for your other intentions
  (pause)
  for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Merciful Father, you know each of us by name, and so we ask you to hear our prayers. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.