

14-2-2023

4th Sunday of Easter - 30 April 2023

Michele Purcell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Purcell, Michele. "4th Sunday of Easter - 30 April 2023." *Pastoral Liturgy* 53, no. 2 (2022): 1-6. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol53/iss2/20>

This Liturgical Resource is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pastoral Liturgy by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.





30 April 2023

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Reflection by Michele Purcell

Introduction

Today's readings call us to trust in God's love. In John's Gospel Jesus reminds us that he is the gate of the sheepfold. Trying to enter through any other way will not lead to salvation. In the first reading Peter speaks to a large crowd at Pentecost and inspires them to repent, be baptised and receive the Holy Spirit. The author of the first letter of Peter writes to reassure the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor and exhort them to trust in God.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you suffered so that we might be made whole. Lord have mercy.

You are our shepherd. Christ have mercy.

You lead us to the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The Oration

Almighty ever-living God,

lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,

so that the humble flock may reach

where the brave Shepherd has gone before.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,

who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

God, for ever and ever.

There are reminders in this prayer back to the 'lamb' imagery in the Easter Triduum, however with significant transposition of meaning. The shepherd has overcome death and in resurrection is one with God in heaven. The sense of shepherd is more of one who blazes a path than of the tender carer of the animals in his charge. The collect seeks that God lead the flock into that same place of joy, offering a sense of the Church as ever under the watchful presence of the divine. The note of humility tempers any Christian boasting or self-aggrandisement in relation to the power of the resurrection. The collect witnesses a broadening of the usual Easter images, and an enlargement of the range of meanings applied to Christ as shepherd. In part this may

arise from the origins of the prayer as a collect during an ancient paschaltide service of evening prayer, where it was possibly prayed in conjunction with a shepherd psalm. Unfortunately, the current version has omitted a reference to the Holy Spirit and baptism that was in the earliest manuscript tradition.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Acts 2:14, 36-41

In the first reading Peter himself becomes a gateway to new life for the crowd of believers who asked him, 'What must we do?'

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 22(23)

The Lord is my shepherd there is nothing I shall want. Or alleluia.

This beautiful and much-loved psalm personifies God as the Good Shepherd caring for every need of the sheep.

Second Reading

1 Peter 2:20-25

Peter's letter was written sometime between 70-90 C.E. It was specifically addressed to the Christian communities who had been enduring constant harassment for refusing to take part in the worship of local gods. They were advised to persevere with their faith and not to react with abuse and threats.

Gospel Reading

John 10:1-10

I am the Gate of the Sheepfold.

Reflection

Today's Gospel text is a continuation of the previous chapter in John which describes, in some detail, Jesus curing a man born blind (9:1-41). It is worth spending some time examining this story since it directly underpins the events which follow in Chapter 10.

Chapter 9 depicts Jesus demonstrating compassion for a blind beggar whom he had met while walking with his disciples. Jesus first reassured the man born blind that he was not a sinner in the eyes of God and then he restored his sight. After he had

been cured, however, the man suffered harassment from the people who had known him when he was blind. He was also abused and rejected by some of the Pharisees. When Jesus found out about this, he sought out the man to reassure him and the man came to believe in him, recognise him as the Messiah and worship him.

Very often in the Hebrew scriptures God has been imaged as a loving shepherd, walking with the people of Israel, and protecting them. Whenever this Gospel was read, listeners would have been familiar with this symbolism. Kings and leaders of the people especially were tasked with representing God as shepherd in the world. In his dealings with the man born blind, Jesus acted with integrity - as a true shepherd in this sense. He was embodying the God of Israel. These Pharisees should have known from the scriptures that they, too, were responsible for caring for the poor, the sick and the suffering among God's people. (Two excellent examples of this can be found in Ezekiel 34 and in today's Psalm). But the behaviour of the Pharisees in Chapter 9 was atrocious and despicable. No wonder Jesus describes them in Chapter 10 as false shepherds who are in fact 'thieves and brigands' (10:1). Jesus was righteously angry with them.

Chapter 10 is written in two parts. The first part is a parable (an 'allegory' in some translations) directly addressed to these Pharisees. The parable itself initially seems to be elaborating on the current best practice of sheep herding in Palestine. Jesus contrasts the honest behaviour of a true shepherd, who enters the sheepfold by the proper gate, with the deceitful behaviour of others who try to sneak in by some other way with ill intent. The parable claims that 'the sheep never follow a stranger but run away from him: 'they do not recognise the voice of strangers' (10:5). (I find this verse particularly pleasing because it credits 'the sheep' in the parable with great good sense!)

Jesus became aware that those to whom he was speaking 'failed to understand' (10:6), but his message was vital, so he tries again. This time Jesus speaks more explicitly saying:

I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe; he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture (9-10).

Jesus is exhorting his listeners – and especially the Jewish leaders – to follow *his* example and to see him as the 'gate' to salvation. As a Jewish prophet, Jesus, in Chapter 9, was demonstrating the way to behave as God, the loving shepherd, would act. To behave unjustly and with no compassion – as the Pharisees did – is likened to someone trying and get into the sheepfold in order 'to steal and kill and destroy.' This is no way to care for God's people and in any case the people will not listen to such leaders (v5).

The words 'I am the gate' have messianic overtones. This statement is the third of seven such emphatic statements in the gospel of John. With the image of the gate Jesus is shown as the one who desires to accompany his sheep. He will take care of their needs and provide safety and guidance. Jesus *is* the gate. Sometimes a shepherd in Jesus' time would lay across the opening of the sheepfold and actually *become* the gate for the sheep and be ready to defend them and lead them out in the morning.

This image of Jesus as the gate by no means suggests a restricted or difficult access to the sheepfold or to the pastures. Jesus states anyone entering through him will be able to 'go freely in and out' (10). The freedom to go in and out also suggests that

both the 'sheep' and the 'shepherds' have missionary responsibilities to one another and the community.

Today's Gospel selection finishes with Jesus' assurance: 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full'. This has always been God's desire for us. Jesus' words are an echo of the words in Psalm 22(23), 'My head you have anointed with oil, my cup is overflowing'.

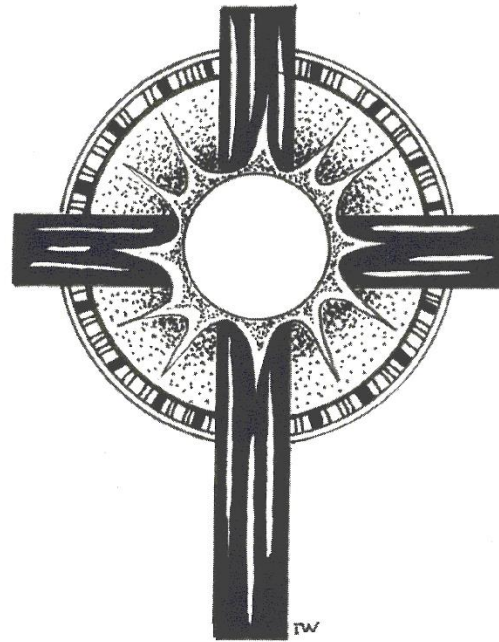
A brief word about today's Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:20-25

Peter's letter was addressed to Christian communities living in Roman provinces in Asia Minor who were being persecuted by non-Christian citizens. This reading should never be interpreted as God wanting us to passively endure unjust abuse in our lives. Jesus is the 'gate', and in today's Gospel we see Jesus publicly confronting the Pharisees when they bullied him and the man who had been healed. The man born blind objected strongly when the Pharisees mistreated him. Jesus supported this man.

During this joyful season of Easter, John's Gospel today invites us to become aware of a time that Jesus had 'opened a gate' for us recently.

What gate is Jesus inviting us to go through now?

**Christ,
the Good Shepherd,
went before us
through suffering
and death.**



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we gather together as a humble flock of the brave Shepherd, let us offer our needs and the needs of our world to the Father.

Petitions

We pray for the Church, that she may be unified during this reflective and joyous period of the Easter season. May this be reflected in the implementation of the Plenary Council and our growth in synodality.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

May all who work in the service to the Church, clergy, lay and religious, be strengthened through the Spirit to faithfully continue their vocation.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of our country that they will be filled with the Spirit like Peter and so work for justice in the world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all people who work in government and non-government agencies for the care of those in need, may they be granted the strength and discernment to faithfully protect those in their care.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the unacknowledged men and women who continue to spread the message of Christ's death and resurrection, regardless of praise or consequence.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the sick and the elderly within our local community, that they will not be alone during this joyous season and be inspired by Christ's presence to live through their suffering and difficulty with the help of those who shepherd them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, we ask that you hear our prayers and grant our petitions, as we continue to remember your selfless sacrifice and the power of the resurrection. We ask this through the power of the Spirit, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Fourth Sunday of Easter, Year A (30 April 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
All people that on earth do dwell	25		613	448	533
All the earth proclaim the Lord	184		611	447	534
Baptized in water				99	179
Come to me, all who labour			660	470	228
Easter Alleluia				348	358
Gift of finest wheat			685	651	191
Good shepherd, you know us				351	
Hail, redeemer, king divine			703	400	390
Like a shepherd				538	467
My shepherd is the Lord			590		25
O flock of Christ			290	345	357
O how good is Christ the Lord		84			
O Lord at your first Eucharist you prayed			773	578	
One bread, one body	129			579	193
Shepherd me, O God	33			597	24
Shepherd of souls, in love, come feed us			804	596	
Take and eat				608	198
The living God my shepherd is			827		
The Lord is my shepherd	26		830	619	506
The Lord is my shepherd, my shield			831		
The Lord my shepherd rules my life			829		
The Lord's my shepherd	144		833	620	473

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Shepherd me, O God		59	
The Lord is my shepherd	127		250
We are God's people		76	
We are his people			273

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 22: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

	CWB	GA	JOBA	LPA	PM
Psalm 22	34a, 51, 589, 590	23, 25	pg. 34	pg. 36	pg. 18

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Easter alleluia (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

This is the day (FWS) *Based on Ps 117/118* [Gathering, Recessional]

You are my shepherd (FWS) *Based on Ps 22/23* [Gifts, Communion]

One body in Christ (Esp V1) (TWB) [Communion]