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Fourth Sunday of Easter - 21 April 2024

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21 April 2024

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction

I am the good shepherd...so Jesus proclaims himself in today's gospel reading. It is an image which resonates with us, even now. This shepherd has laid down his life for us, and in this, we find life.

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 paschal tide 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 4:8-12

Peter is before the Temple authorities following the healing of the man-born-lame. Just as they had questioned Jesus, the authorities ask Peter by whose authority has this man been healed. By the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene...the only name by which we can be saved.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 117(118):1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28-29

The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone.

This psalm is an individual's prayer of thanksgiving for the wonders God has done, for God's love has no end. We give thanks because that which is rejected by the world – Christ – has become the cornerstone.

Second Reading

1 John 3:1-2

Today's second reading would have to be one of the most eloquent meditations on the abundance of God's love for us in all the pages of Sacred Scripture: God's love is lavished upon us, God's children.

Gospel Reading

John 10:11-18

The image of Jesus as the good shepherd is one that resonates with most of us (even if most of us now do not live in rural settings and our experience of sheep is largely second- or third hand). There is something reassuring and comforting about the idea of a Saviour who knows us and would lay down his life for us (he already has, of course).

Reflection

Have any of you ever tried to move a mob of sheep from one paddock to another? I have. My uncle was a farmer, and once, many years ago while staying with my aunt and uncle, my uncle asked some of my cousins and me to help him move a mob of sheep out of one paddock, down the road a bit, around the corner of a T junction in the road, and then into another paddock. Well, for this little city kid it was quite an adventure. This little city kid was wrong. It all sounds simple doesn't it? Move some

sheep from one paddock to the next, just up the road a bit. Well, these sheep did not want to go through the gate. And when they finally did go through the gate, they went everywhere – jumping through channels at the side of road, and bolting for freedom this way and that.

We got them together again, and then started to move them down the road. As we came to the corner at the T-junction, my uncle told me to run ahead and stop them from taking the wrong turn into the T-junction. At this point, this little city kid was beginning to wish that his uncle was not a farmer. I was standing there, madly waving my arms about, trying to stop a couple of hundred sheep from going straight ahead, trying to get them to turn a corner. Almost all of them went the right way, and we finally got them into the second paddock.

Sheep are hard work.

And that is why what Jesus says in today's Gospel is so astounding.

For the people of Israel sheep were important animals. They not only provided meat. They also provided wool, milk, oil and skins. Because sheep were so necessary to the life of Ancient Israel, shepherds were important people. The life of the community depended – in part – on them. If a shepherd was slack and did not look after his sheep; if the shepherd let the sheep run away; if the shepherd let the sheep be attacked, the people ultimately suffered.

Sheep are hard work, and the people who first heard these words of Jesus knew this, just as they knew the value of a good shepherd, and the dangers of a poor shepherd. But Jesus does not only extol the virtues of any good shepherd. He goes one step further.

Jesus proclaims himself to be the Good Shepherd: the One who knows his sheep, and the One who will lay down his life for his sheep. In the light of this Easter Candle, these words ring with an even deeper truth for us. Jesus is the One who has laid down his life for us, his sheep. Jesus is the same one who was risen on the third day to destroy death forever. But it is not enough that Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

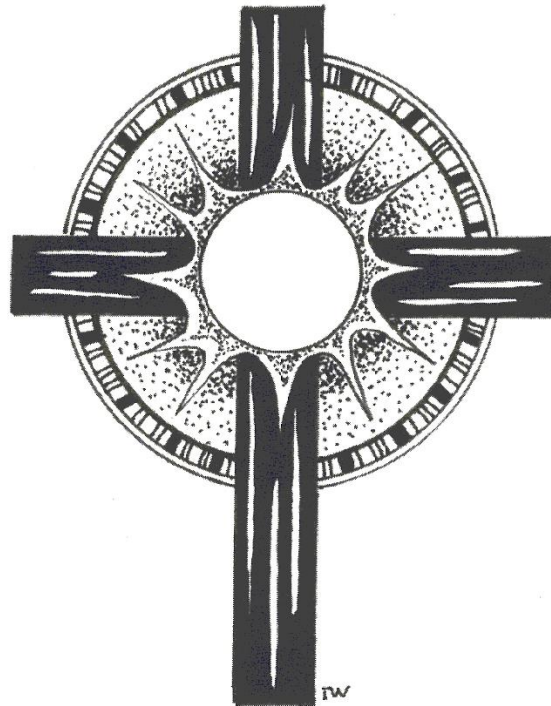
In Baptism, we are baptised into the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. Because of this Baptism, we are called to be Christ in the world today. And that baptismal vocation is strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through our washing in the waters of new life in the Sacrament of Baptism, and our anointing with Sacred Chrism in the Sacrament of Confirmation, we are called to be the good shepherds for our world today.

For this reason, the Church asks us, on this Good Shepherd Sunday during the Easter Season, to remember the vocation which arises from Baptism and Confirmation. All of us are called and indeed challenged to be Christ in the world.

Good Shepherd Sunday is also a day when the Church asks us to pray especially for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. So, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, in a special way, we turn to God in prayer. And our prayer is that God will continue to provide pastors for his Church, shepherds after his own heart. Priests who will

faithfully proclaim the Word of God; priests who will minister the Sacraments and equip the People of God for ministry. And we pray, too, that God may give us warm and generous hearts with which to always support and encourage our priests.

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



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

People of God, with Christ as our Shepherd we will not want so let us offer all our needs in prayer.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and the leaders of our Church. May they always try to be good shepherds to the People of God and share the call to be a synodal Church with love and generosity.

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

We pray for all those who lead nations in conflict. May the Holy Spirit open them to understand that violence cannot end their troubles and that peace is the only true way to bring hope and prosperity to their people.

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

We pray on this World Day of Prayer for vocations to the Christian life in its many forms. May all the baptised grow in knowledge of their role as priest and prophet and that those called to the sacrament of Holy Orders be imbued with the spirit of service and humility.

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

We pray for those who are suffering in war torn countries. May they find peace and safety through the efforts of those who work for justice and deliver aid in these dangerous areas.

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

We pray for those who work the land and care for animals that feed us. May they find justice through those who lead their industry and the strength to make good decisions for the animals in their care.

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

We pray for our community and those who cannot be with us due to illness and other difficulties. May they experience the love of the Good Shepherd through the compassion of those who care for them.

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

Conclusion

God of mercy and kindness, we offer all these needs and those silent in our hearts, knowing in faith that you will answer them through the power of the Spirit and in the name of the risen Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
Baptised in water				99	179
Because the Lord is my shepherd	66				
Christ is alive, with joy we sing			639		
Christ is made the sure foundation			640		482
Come to me			660		228
Easter alleluia				348	358
Easter glory fills the sky			671	358	366
Eye has not seen	146				466
Gift of finest wheat			685	651	191
Good shepherd, you know us				357	
Hail, Redeemer, king divine			703	400	390
Like a shepherd	160			538	467
O Christ the great foundation	129			565	483
O flock of Christ			290	345	357
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	
Sing praise to our creator			809	393	
Take and eat				608	198
The Church's one foundation			819	614	484
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's my Shepherd, I'll not want (Crimond)	144		833	620	473
The Lord my shepherd rules my life			829		
This is the day		159			

Title	AOVNG	S&S1
Shepherd me, O God		59
The Lord is my shepherd (Blakesley)	127	

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 117: *The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone. /Alleluia.*

	CWB	JOBB	LPB
Psalm 117	303	pg. 40	pg. 60

Music selections by Michael Mangan

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

This is the day that the Lord has made (LCC) *Ps 117 (118)* Children's Lectionary Translation

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

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