



AMDG
FOURTH SUNDAY OF
EASTER
YEAR A
7 MAY 2017



The Lord is my Shepherd

OPENING PRAYER

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.

The fourth Sunday after Easter is traditionally known as 'Good Shepherd Sunday'. For those of us who live in rural areas, a shepherd and his dog are a familiar sight. In the Middle East, however, a shepherd does not use dogs, he walks ahead of the flock and the sheep follow him. They recognise his voice. I become still and take time to reflect on the presence of God all around me, within me. I listen intently:
Among the many voices speaking to me in my heart, do I recognise his voice calling me?
I take time to tell him how I feel today as one trusted friend speaks to another.
I look at the path he is showing me, inviting me to follow him, and offering me the protection of his arms.
What response do I make?
Finally, I bring my prayer to a close and give glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 22

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 overflowing.

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.

This very familiar psalm is worth praying many times. I may pray it, verse by verse, as the story of my life in which God has been a shepherd to me directly and through others, and in which I have been a shepherd to others. I may pray it as the life of Jesus – the true shepherd who is my model. What particular part of Jesus' life as shepherd attracts me? How, perhaps, is he calling me to imitate him? I may pray it as though I am in the shoes of those who suffer in our world today. In whose shoes will I stand? What is my prayer to God as that person/persons? I draw my prayer to a close in whatever way is appropriate.

GOSPEL: JOHN 10: 1-10

Jesus said: 'I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand that he meant by telling it to them. So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold.

All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them. 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.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.'

From the earliest times – even in the Catacombs, the Church has used the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd. At that time the shepherd's care for his sheep was personalised – he knew each by name – a fine model for the love of Jesus for his disciples, and for each of us. The gate of the sheepfold was a symbol of unity among divided Christians – quite an issue for John's followers – and again for us. 'The shepherd of Israel' is one of the Old Testament images of God who led them his people out of slavery into the green pastures of the promised land. I meet the risen Jesus – the shepherd who gave his life for me. I ask him to help me become still so that I can open my heart to hear his word and let it touch me. Speak Lord Jesus! I may like to speak to him about my joys; my gratitude for the blessings I have; my problems and sorrows; my hopes for myself and for others. Lord Jesus, may I have your life 'and have it to the full.' I ask for renewed trust in his care and guidance as he leads me in my daily life and – finally – to heaven and union with God.

Here's a text if you've only got a minute...

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia. *Entrance Antiphon*

The whole house of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.

First Reading, Acts 2: 14

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

Psalm 23:1

You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Second Reading, 1 Peter 2:25

I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe.

Gospel, John 10:9



How does this image help me meditate on the events of Eastertide?

REFLECTIONS

What does the week hold for me and how do I feel God may be calling me?

And so, what do I want to ask of God for myself and for others?

Based on Prego by St Beuno's
Outreach in the Diocese of Wrexham



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