



AMDG
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
YEAR C
12TH MAY 2019



‘I know them and they follow me’

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.

This Fourth Sunday of Easter is always kept as Good Shepherd Sunday, when we hear from the tenth chapter of St John’s Gospel. This image of Christ the Shepherd caring for his followers has been used since the earliest years of Christianity. In the biblical way of shepherding, the shepherd leads the flock, calling each sheep by name. The sheep know and trust the voice of their shepherd, following him wherever he leads: a fine model for the love of Jesus for his disciples – and for each of us.

Paul and Barnabas (today’s *First Reading*), in the face of jealousies, and expulsion by the Jews, reach out to the Gentiles with the good news of salvation. Those who accept the good news will find joy, and the *Psalms* praises God the Shepherd, the source of this joy.

John, in the *Second Reading*, describes a vision of God, as Lamb, shepherding the saved from every nation and he reveals (in the *Gospel*) the manner of that shepherding – with a great and tender care.

This week, perhaps I can place myself ever more deeply under the great care of God who, for me, is both Shepherd and Lamb.

FIRST READING ACTS 13: 14, 43–52 (part)

Paul and Barnabas urged the Jews and devout converts to remain faithful to the grace God had given them. The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, ‘We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: “I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.”’ It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.

But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

As always, I come to the Lord gently but confidently, aware of how I am feeling now. What am I bringing with me to prayer? With the help of the Spirit’s joyful presence, what can I leave to one side?

I listen to Paul and Barnabas and I ponder... what graces has God given to me?

I take my time, trying to recall what I have received.

In what ways am I thankful for these gifts?

How do I remain faithful to them? ... Use them? ... Share them?

As I read the text again, I may be able to recall occasions when I have felt jealous or have rejected someone for certain beliefs or behaviour ...

or I may have been the recipient of such judgments.

I bring any recollections before the Lord now, asking him to shed his light on my feelings and my actions.

I am called to be a light. In my place of work, home, community, how am I light for others? Does my presence, what I share with others, lead to a spirit of thankfulness in them?

Conscious of the Lord’s Holy Spirit with me, I ask for a renewed sense of joy and gratitude. I end with a slow sign of the cross.

GOSPEL JOHN 10: 27–30

Jesus said:
‘The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice;
I know them and they follow me.
I give them eternal life;
they will never be lost
and no one will ever steal them from me.
The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone,
and no one can steal from the Father.
The Father and I are one.’

I begin this time of prayer conscious that I desire to come before the Lord with deep trust. Like the sheep of the text, I wish to follow the Lord, to be with him, to stay close beside him.

I read the Gospel slowly, stopping often and pausing to allow the words to sink deep within me. I take my time.

I may like to ponder the 'one-ness' of Father and Son ...

what is it like to be called to have a share in this unity?

I am not excluded, not forgotten, nor lost or stolen away.

I am known by the Lord. I belong to him.

How does this make me feel?

As I ponder being known in this way, being protected by him, I might notice a desire in me to respond to the Lord in some way.

How do I listen to him in my daily life?

In what ways do I already follow him?

How would I like to respond more deeply?

Perhaps I imagine myself and the Lord, together, safely in the sheepfold. We are resting in the warmth of the sunshine.

What do I want to say to him now?

Perhaps I have a sense of him wanting to say something to me.

Or we simply spend some moments enjoying each other's company.

When ready, I end slowly: *Our Father* ...

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

'I have made you a light for the nations'

First Reading

God made us, we belong to him

Psalm

The Lamb will lead them and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Second Reading

'I know them and they follow me.'

Gospel

This week's texts if you want to reflect further

Acts 13: 14, 43–52; Ps. 100 (101); Apocalypse 7: 9, 14b–17; John 10: 27–30



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