

READINGS, REFLECTION AND PRAYERS FOR 4th SUNDAY OF EASTER

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 2:14. 36-41

God has made him both Lord and Christ.'

On the day of Pentecost

Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed them in a loud voice:

'The whole House of Israel can be certain

that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.'

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles,

'What must we do, brothers?'

'You must repent,' Peter answered

'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ

for the forgiveness of your sins,

and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise that was made is for you and your children,

and for all those who are far away,

for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.'

He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments.

He urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation'.

They were convinced by his arguments,

They accepted what he said and were baptised.

That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Psalm 22 (23)*

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.

Response

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.

Response

You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil;

my cup is overflowing.

Response

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.

Response

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST PETER 2:20-25

You have come back to the shepherd of your souls.

The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing it patiently
when you are punished after doing your duty.
This, in fact, is what you were called to do,
because Christ suffered for you
and left an example for you to follow the way he took.
He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth.
He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults;
when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge.
He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross,
so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness;
through his wounds you have been healed.
You had gone astray like sheep
but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The Word of the Lord.

*I am the good shepherd;
I know my own and my own know me. Jn 10: 14*

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 10:1-10

Jesus said: 'I tell you most 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.

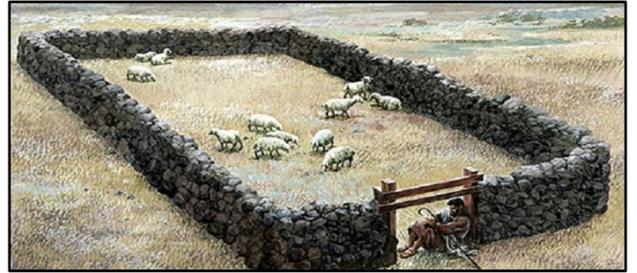
When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them,
and the sheep follow because they know his voice.

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 what 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 so that they may have life and have it to the full.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Taken from <https://www.catholicbishops.ie/readings/?feature=sunday>
Image from: <https://normansennema.com/archives/18173>

REFLECTION

Shepherds and sheep are mutual in their relationships. Shepherds need to know their sheep's ways and needs. Sheep need to be able to trust the shepherd's wisdom and faithfulness.

In our CoVid-affected community, many people have initiated acts of kindness. Yet, maybe you know older people longing for contact with their children and grandchildren. Maybe you know people very anxious about their loss of income. The stress in relationships in some of our homes has overflowed publicly. Beginning in our homes, our example and leadership has been critically important. Today's three readings were written to encourage believers to live their faith authentically in their communities each of which were under some kind of threat.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter encouraged the disciples at Pentecost:

Repent, live the meaning of your baptism and you will receive the Holy Spirit!

For a range of reasons – some warranted, some unwarranted – it takes some courage to identify as Catholic Christians in some circles today. Call to mind the level of anxiety which Jewish Christians felt in Jerusalem following the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter was so human so often but as the leader Jesus called him to be, Peter called people to faith, hope and love, and many were added to their community. Let's pray our words and example also can help people.

In his First Letter, Peter wrote to encourage Jewish Christians in northern Asia Minor (today's Turkey) scattered there following the Roman repression of the Jews in 66 A.D.. He knew so many of them were slaves. Meanwhile, he himself was in dire straits in Rome. He encouraged Christians to live with faith, hope and love within their circumstances and limits. In that very

different age, they were powerless to do anything about issues we would regard today as injustices. He encouraged them to respect authorities but to hold onto their own goodness and not to lose their soul. In face of the virus, our civic leaders have limited us for good reasons. May we seek wisdom - words and example, nourished by prayer - to help and protect people even within these limits placed upon us.

John's Gospel encourages shepherds of the disciples to be vigilant. Sheep can wander away from the flock and be prey to predators and thieves – day and night. Each sheep needs to be able to recognize its shepherd. As well, all Christians will always need to take time out to recognize Jesus shepherding and gatekeeping for each of us personally and the whole flock.

CoVid-blighted, our civic and faith communities have needed good shepherds. However, we've also needed rank and file members of the flock to take active personal responsibility for our own vigilance against harm and to take up our need to grow in understanding, to take initiative, to be mindful of how we treat others and to pray. There are people near and far away who are suffering badly. God will call and empower each of us in some way to respond.

Thank you for every effort you have made to live with faith, hope and love. We pray for all who are grieving. We thank and pray for our civic leaders and all workers – those on the front line, those out of view and all those at home, including those who have lost their jobs. We thank and pray for shepherds of our faith, hope and love, who, with the means at their disposal, are still encouraging us to live the joy of God's goodness during this time.

During cyclones, North Queenslanders know not to be deceived by a lull in the destructive winds; it is just the eye of the cyclone passing over them before the winds return from the opposite direction. Let's keep helping one another by prayer and action. Let's thank and pray for someone has helped us personally by leadership or kind example. Mary MacKillop's last words to her Sisters were "Go on!" Let's go on!

Prayer for our World

from Stephen Davies/CAFOD

Creator God,
who has given us this beautiful world, appointed us as its guardians
and gifted us with what we need, forgive us for any harm we have caused.
Forgive us for the times our way of life disadvantages our neighbours.

Inspire us to care for the environment, to help rebuild lives and communities
and to share in the griefs and anxieties, and joys and hopes of all your people,
so that all your creation, the "earnest longings" in all peoples
and the faith, hope and love of all who know You, may flourish. Amen!