

First reading Acts 2:14a, 36-41**‘God has made him both Lord and Christ.’**

On the day of Pentecost Peter, standing with the Eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.’

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptised, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Responsorial Psalm23(22): 1- 6. R1**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;
he revives my soul.

He guides me along the right path,
for the sake of his name.
Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of
death,
no evil would I fear, for you are with me.
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort.

You have prepared a table before me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord’s own house shall I dwell
for length of days unending.

Second reading 1 peter 2: 20-25**‘You have returned to the Shepherd of your souls.’**

Beloved: If when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Gospel Acclamation John 10:14**Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord. I know my sheep and my own know me.

Alleluia.**Gospel John 10: 1-10****‘I am the door of the sheep.’**

At that time: Jesus said, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.’ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So Jesus again said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.’

Copyright: The readings are from the Jerusalem Bible published by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd 2019

Feast days this week**Tuesday 28th April: St Peter Chanel****Wednesday 29th April: St Catherine of Siena****Thursday 30th April: St Pius V****Friday 1st May: St Joseph the Worker****Cycle of Prayer****Vocations**

Especially on World Day of Prayer for Vocations — 4th Sunday of Easter

Background

The World Day of Prayer for Vocations is held each year on the Fourth Sunday of Easter. In the Gospel of John read on this Sunday, in each of the three years, Jesus speaks of himself as the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd who has come so that people may have life to the full, the one who lays down his life for his sheep, the one who knows his sheep — they recognise his voice.

Prayer

*Father, in your plan for our salvation
you provide shepherds for your people.*

*Fill your Church with the spirit of courage and love.
Raise up worthy ministers of your altars and ardent but gentle
servants of the gospel.*

The Good Shepherd

Jesus often illustrated his teaching by referring to shepherds and sheep. He sees himself as the Good Shepherd foretold by the prophets. Today's gospel considers the relationship between the Good Shepherd and the sheep. The imagery is old. The message is topical. It is relevant to us. By faith we accept Jesus, Our relationship is a deeply personal one. The bond of love uniting us is based on the love that unites the Father and Jesus. Our new existence is founded on God's unbreakable love and faithfulness.

In order to enter eternal life we must listen to Jesus and obey him. The alternative opening prayer puts this in practical terms. We have to tune our minds to the sound of his voice. Self-centredness can make us deaf to the voice of Jesus. Easy options can draw us into easier paths than the one he has traced. Pressure to abandon Christian principles is inevitable. But God is faithful and will not let us be tempted beyond our strength. No one can drag us away from him, The Father has entrusted us to his Son. The same God who kept faith with Jesus by raising him from the dead will also raise us by his power.

Paul and Barnabas 'spoke out boldly', and made an impact. A courageous proclamation of the gospel to our contemporaries can be as fruitful now as it was in apostolic times. All the baptised, particularly those who are confirmed, are bound to spread the faith. Laity as well as priests and religious are in the service of the Risen Lord. Our faith urges us to take personal part in the work of evangelisation. Are we doing so? How many evils persist in our society just because good people say nothing and do nothing? A breviary hymn of Eastertide (no.25) spells out what is expected of us by the Risen Lord: Now he bids us tell abroad/How the lost may be restored/How the penitent forgiven/ How we too may enter heaven.

"Good Shepherd Sunday" is a good occasion for us to think and pray about how the catholic church will fare for priests in the future. Right now it appears that the average age of ordained priests is about sixty five, a statistic that demands significant change in how to recruit priests for the future, and what is to be expected of them. Pdraig McCarthy made this point thus, "there is no such thing as a priestless parish. There may not be an ordained priest there, but the parish is a priestly people. How will this priesthood of the baptised take flesh in the coming decades? What factors which had value in the past are now hindering the mission of the church? What new model of ministerial priesthood is needed?" associationofcatholicpriests.ie