

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

The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth. *Entrance Antiphon*

The stone which the builders rejected has become the corner stone. *Psalm*

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us. *Second Reading*

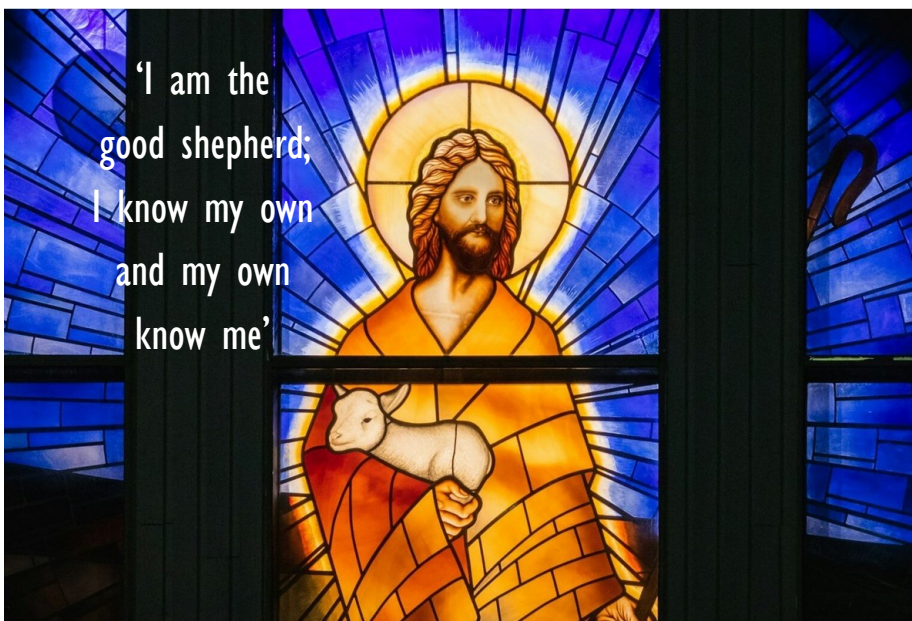
There are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. *Gospel*

Almighty and ever-living God,
give us new strength
from the courage of Christ our shepherd
and lead us to join the saints in heaven.

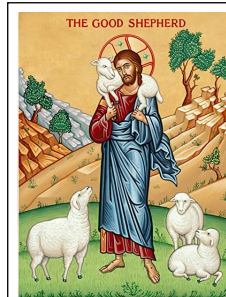
Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Acts 4: 8–12; Psalm 117 (118); 1 John 3: 1–2; John 10: 11–18

Greg Rosenke www.unsplash.com



If you'd like to receive Prego by email each week, sign up at
www.stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com
ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fourth Sunday of Easter
(Good Shepherd Sunday)
Year B, 21st April 2024

'They too will listen to my voice ...'

We continue our journey through Eastertide, experiencing the joy of the Risen Lord. This fourth Sunday of Easter traditionally features Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and is also kept annually as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

In the **First Reading**, Peter explains that the miracle he has been able to perform came not from him, but from the name of Jesus Christ, the keystone rejected by the builders.

The **Psalm**, normally sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, is a thanksgiving prayer from someone who has been rescued from an ordeal. It uses the same cornerstone image as the First Reading. Like Peter, the psalmist acknowledges the Lord as his Saviour.

The writer of the **Second Reading** stresses that we are God's children. Although we might find the path difficult, and feel unsure of what the future holds, we will be transformed into God's likeness when we meet him.

In the **Gospel**, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd, who is prepared to lay down his life for us; he knows us intimately and wants to bring everyone into his fold.

On this Day of Prayer for Vocations, we might pray that everyone should be willing and able to fulfil their own vocation. We continue to pray for war-torn countries, that they will find a Good Shepherd to guide them out of conflict.



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.

Second Reading 1 John 3: 1–2

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us,
by letting us be called God's children;
and that is what we are.
Because the world refused to acknowledge him,
therefore it does not acknowledge us.
My dear people, we are already the children of God
but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed;
all we know is, that when it is revealed
we shall be like him
because we shall see him as he really is.

I settle down to pray in a place which I find comfortable, or wherever I can spend some time undisturbed.

I reflect on my mood just now. Am I looking forward to this time with the Lord, or am I driven by a sense of 'must' or 'ought'? However I feel, I am here now, and I trust the Lord will be with me, whether I am aware of it or not.

After a couple of long breaths, I start reading St John's words. Maybe the text is like an old friend, or perhaps it has always puzzled me.

'What are you going to tell me today Lord?' I pause, and ponder.

If I find difficult to pray the text as it stands, I may want to make it personal to me and put it in the first person:

*'Think of the love that the Father has lavished on me,
by letting me be called God's child; and that is what I am.'*

I stay with this awhile. What happens?

In what way has the meaning of the text changed for me?

Perhaps I recall instances where the love of God has been lavished on me and on my loved ones, and eased a difficult situation. I might want to express my thanks and gratitude now.

Life as a follower of Christ is not always easy. I may have had to make uncomfortable, counter-cultural choices. I speak to the Lord about these situations. What happens as I listen to him?

What the future holds is not yet clear. How much does this bother me?

As my prayer comes to an end, I may like to ask for greater trust.

Glory be to the Father ...

Gospel John 10: 11–18

Jesus said:
'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; this is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.

And there are other sheep I have that are not of this fold, and these I have to lead as well. They too will listen to my voice, and there will be only one flock, and one shepherd.

The Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down of my own free will, and as it is in my power to lay it down, so it is in my power to take it up again; and this is the command I have been given by my Father.'

Before starting to pray, I seek to come to quiet in whatever way works best for me. Perhaps I have my Bible, a cross or a well-loved picture near me.

I take a few deep breaths. I then read the text slowly, stopping when I feel I need to reflect on its meaning. I may need to do this several times.

How does the image of Jesus as shepherd, and myself as one of his sheep, resonate with me?

Perhaps I spend some time reflecting on the qualities needed to be a Good Shepherd: a shepherd who defends his charges, and defends me.

I may want to express my gratitude to the Lord, who will not abandon me when I need his protection and help.

How do I feel when I realise Jesus the Good Shepherd knows me intimately, just as I am. Do I find this comforting ... threatening ... or...?

Jesus is concerned for everyone, even if they are not of this fold. I ponder.

How do I behave towards Christians who are not in full communion with my own church? Do I share Jesus's yearning for unity?

Finally, I may want to spend a few moments considering Jesus laying down his life of his own free will for me, and taking it up again. I speak to him openly about what arises in me.

When I am ready, I thank the Lord for being with me today in my prayer.