

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

The promise that was made is for you and your children. *First Reading*

You are there ... you give me comfort. *Psalm*

You have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. *Second Reading*

Anyone who enters through me will be safe *Gospel*

'Do not be afraid to open the doors to Christ ...' *Pope John Paul II*

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 want to explore further:
Acts 2: 14, 36-41; Psalm 22 (23); 1 Peter 2: 20-25; John 10: 1-10



Shepherd and sheep fold at Nazareth village (Ferrell Jenkins)

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fourth Sunday of Easter
Year A, 30th April 2023

'I am the gate'

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, the Gospel for each yearly cycle is always taken from St John, chapter 10, where Jesus speaks of himself as a Good Shepherd.

In today's **Gospel** (Year A), Jesus is comparing and contrasting himself with those religious leaders who lack any real commitment or sense of responsibility to the ones in their care. The sheep do not recognise such leaders, but they do know, and are ready to follow, the Good Shepherd who alone enters by the gate. Jesus is warning his listeners to be discerning about those they listen to and those they follow.

The **Psalm**, 'The Lord is my Shepherd', tells us that God is always caring for us, as a shepherd cares for the sheep. In the **First Reading**, from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear Peter calling all to conversion, while the **Second Reading** is a reminder that when we do stray, we can always return to the Lord.

Today is also known as Vocations Sunday. So perhaps this week, I could ponder the following questions: On what am I spending my energies? Who do I listen to and follow? How am I giving witness to my faith? What contribution am I making to the building up of truth, love, justice and tolerance? How, and from where, do I hear the Good Shepherd in my daily life?

Let's pray for the grace to trust the gift of the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us, that we might have faith in the One who has called and is calling us. Amen.



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.

Psalm 22 (23)

R./ 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.
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 you 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.

I ready myself for prayer by taking note of how am I feeling. What is life like at the moment? Is it leaving me exhausted, feeling a bit down, in need of rest? Very slowly, I become aware of the Lord's presence. He has come to lead me to rest, to give me food, to restore my soul. I patiently await his shepherding of me.

I read this most well quoted and loved psalm, slowly, very gently, a few times. Then, in my imagination, I might lie back on the green pasture, in the warmth of the full sun as I listen to the quiet flow of the restful waters. Closing my eyes and allowing the words of the psalm to wash over me, I pause often to drink in the delights of this time and space:

You are my shepherd

You give me repose

You lead me

You are true to your name

You comfort me

You prepare a banquet for me

You anoint my head

I shall dwell with you

I pause, in the presence of my Good Shepherd, to ponder what is arising within. When ready, I end with the refrain of this wonderful psalm.

Gospel 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: they 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.'

I read this Gospel slowly and prayerfully. Jesus emphasises twice that he is speaking solemnly, so I listen with the seriousness his word demands.

What else do I detect in his voice? Gentleness, firmness, love, strength ...?

I pause often, allowing his message to sink into my heart.

What am I noticing, feeling, as I listen?

Am I disturbed by any part of this Gospel? Am I comforted? I know I can always speak freely with my Shepherd about what I am experiencing.

What is it like to be called? To be led out?

Do I feel I am one of the Shepherd's own?

Where do I see myself in relation to the Shepherd?

Jesus calls me to offer me his life – life to the full. Where and how am I experiencing that fulness of life in the here and now?

In our time of ubiquitous social media, with its 'influencers' and 'followers', who or what am I following? How discerning am I in 'hearing' the voice?

I might like to sit alongside Jesus in the entrance opening to the sheepfold – he himself is the gate – and I am totally secure with him.

I speak to him from the heart about how much he means to me and, when ready, I end once more with the refrain of today's psalm:

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