**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer for April 25, 2021**

**Fourth Sunday of Easter - Good Shepherd Sunday**

*“There will be one flock, one shepherd.”*

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Suzie and Betty)**

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Welcome, everyone, to our celebration of Good Shepherd Sunday!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Betty and I prepared today’s communal prayer.
* Thanks to all the people who will create space for our prayer: Reggie Ott, Peggy Thompson, Greg Campbell, Jim De Quattro. Donna Ellerman, Mary Dolmage, Donna Sasser, Lynn Bufka, Kathy and Bill Cavanaugh, and Kathleen Cross.
* Our reflection questions will appear in Chat during our Sharing. Thank you for otherwise not using Chat until after our closing song.

**SETTLING IN (Betty Thompson)**

Let’s quiet ourselves so we can be attentive to what God hopes for us today. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and slowly fill you with the peace of Christ. We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together… and one to welcome in the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now let us join with Peggy Thompson in praising this day that the Lord has made!

**OPENING SONG Sing to the Mountains – Bob Dufford** **(Peggy Thompson)**

Refrain: Sing to the mountains, sing to the sea,

Raise your voices, lift your hearts!

This is the day the Lord has made,

Let all the earth rejoice!

I will give thanks to you, my Lord.
You have answered my plea.
You have saved my soul from death.
You are my strength and my song. Refrain

This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us be glad and rejoice!
He has turned all death to life.
Sing of the glory of God! Refrain

**GREETING (Suzie De Quattro)**

Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP / GATHERING PRAYER**  **(Suzie)**

We are here to continue moving deeper into the Easter light of Christ. Together we can make abundant light for the world.

Holy One, teach us how to live in your light every day and share it with others, especially with those who suffer in any kind of darkness.

O God, thank you for your gift of Easter peace.

Let your peace flow into us and through us as we put on your mind and your heart.

Teach our hearts mercy and forgiveness like yours.

Teach our minds creativity to build justice amid mercy.

May we inquire, nudge, and challenge each other

to imagine what none us could conceive alone.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Betty)**

Shepherds are very important in Jewish history. Abraham and Jacob were shepherds, as were Moses, the prophet Amos and of course David. And yet, as Pope Francis tells us, in the time of Jesus, shepherds were men and women who lived on the edges of society. They were considered unclean because their work kept them from the required rituals of purification. They were people to be kept at a distance, to be feared. And in today’s gospel Jesus tells us he is one of them.

A bit of context to consider - At night, for protection and companionship, shepherds would put their flocks together into a common enclosure, a sheepfold. One of the shepherds would be stationed at the gate to protect the flocks that were inside. Then in the morning the shepherds separated their sheep by calling to them. The sheep were so attuned to their own shepherd’s voice that they would not follow another voice, even if someone tried to steal them by imitating their shepherd.

This Sunday, we hear that Jesus calls himself the “Good Shepherd” and assures his friends that his sheep will recognize his voice. To focus on this Good News, we have included more from John’s Gospel about Jesus as a Shepherd. And as you listen, remember that Pope Francis reminded us that shepherds were men and women.

(Slight pause.)

We will begin by singing “Shepherd Me, O God” with Reggie Ott, based upon David’s familiar psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

**SONG: Shepherd Me, O God - John Michael Talbot (Reggie Ott)**

Refrain:
Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.

1 God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want,
I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love,
I walk by the quiet waters of peace. [Refrain]

3 Though I should wander the valley of death,
I fear no evil, for you are at my side,
your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope. [Refrain]

5 Surely your kindness and mercy
follow me all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of my God forevermore. [Refrain]

**Suzie:** Now Donna Ellerman will read from chapter 10 of the Gospel of John, and Jim De Quattrowill offer questions for us to ponder in silence. You might stay with one question, to go deeper.

**READING 1**  John 10:1-10 **(Donna Ellerman)**

“In all truth I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a bandit.

The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock;

the gatekeeper lets the shepherd in, the sheep hear her voice, one by one she calls her own sheep and leads them out.

When the shepherd has brought out all those that are hers, she goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know her voice.

They will never follow a stranger, but will run away because they do not recognize the voice of strangers.”

Jesus told them….

“I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: such a one will go in and out and will find pasture.…

I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.”

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 1 (Jim De Quattro)**

What surprises you about the pastures where Jesus has led you? Have any of them been arid or depleted?

What does it mean to you, to “have life to the full”?



**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty: Mary Dolmage will continue with the Gospel of John.

### READING 2 - GOSPEL (Jn 10:11-18) (Mary Dolmage)

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

A hired worker, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, abandons the sheep as soon as a wolf comes, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep;

a hired worker 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. No one takes it from me, I lay it down of my own free will.

*(Slight pause)*

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

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 2**

Reflect upon a time when you felt a wolf had scattered the flock to which you belong.

Who are or have been your good shepherds? When did you follow their lead and when did you resist?



**COMMUNAL SILENCE (Betty:** Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**READING 3 – REFLECTION (Suzie)**

In today’s gospel Jesus is telling us that there is nothing we shall want, and we will have abundant life if we take care of one another the way a good shepherd takes care of the sheep.

This is both as a comfort and a challenge. The comfort is that the Good Shepherd knows us, provides for us, and loves us. Jesus tells us that we **will** recognize his voice and that his deep desire is for **all** to be part of the flock.

The challenge is that we are called to be good shepherds to others. That can demand a lot from us.

Sometimes it’s easy to recognize “the sheep of our flock,” like family or close community. We probably already extend ourselves as shepherds or companions to them. But there’s a challenge here, of course: How do we know when to shepherd them – and when to be companions on **their** journeys?

Another challenge: Jesus tells us our flock is bigger than those who are obvious. How far do we stretch? Part of our flock is people not like us. Part of our flock is the birds and animals and waters of the Earth. Can we “lay down our lives” for **all** in our flock?

*(Slight pause)*

**QUESTIONS 3 (Jim De Quattro)**

For whom do you resist laying down your life?

A large flock has many needs. How do you choose where and how to use your life? How have your choices changed during your life?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE (Betty:** Share slide 3, time 3:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty: Lynn Bufka will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Lynn Bufka)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[Long-ish pause]*

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Pause.]*

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

Now Greg Campbell will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Greg Campbell)**

Let’s pause to notice the prayer that may be rising in your own heart right now. *(Pause.)*

Our response will be: Risen One, hear our prayer.

God within us, make us into a gate for encountering others as one global flock. For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

God among us, keep us in solidarity with people who suffer because they don’t have a flock where they feel at home. For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

God beyond us, sustain the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they ask not simply what they are to do for your kingdom, but how they are to be your presence. For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

God of all, give us the self-sacrificing courage to be good companions to your whole flock, including bees and whales and the air that all breathe. For this we pray. Risen One, hear our prayer.

For what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourselves.

(Shared prayers)

God of many names, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Donna Sasser)**

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, we hope to share the gifts of abundant life by taking care of the whole flock, just as Jesus takes care of his sheep. Each week we ask ourselves how we will do this. Have your answers started to fall into patterns? This week, is there an unaccustomed way in which you want to offer yourself for the flock? *[Pause.]*

Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Kathy Cavanaugh)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us. *[Pause.]*

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it.  *[Pause.]*

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in our world.

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Bill Cavanaugh)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Kathleen Cross)**

Yahweh is my shepherd,

I lack nothing.

You prepare a table before me

under the eyes of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil,

 my cup brims over.

 Ah, how goodness and kindness pursue me

Every day of my life;

my home, the house of Yahweh,

as long as I live!

Amen.

Now Reggie Ott will lead our final song.

**CLOSING SONG – Like A Shepherd – Bob Dufford (Reggie Ott)**

Like a shepherd he feeds his flock and gathers the lambs in his arms,
holding them carefully close to his heart, leading them home.
I myself will shepherd them, for others have led them astray.
The lost I will rescue and heal their wounds and pasture them, giving them rest.

Like a shepherd he feeds his flock and gathers the lambs in his arms,
holding them carefully close to his heart, leading them home.
Come unto me if you are heavily burdened,
and take my yoke upon your shoulders, I will give you rest.

Like a shepherd he feeds his flock and gathers the lambs in his arms,

holding them carefully close to his heart, leading them home.

**RESOURCES**

Sr. Bonnie Anne MacLennan, CSJ – Catholic Women Preach for 4/25/2021 –<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/04252021>

Pope Francis’ [Christmas homily](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2017/documents/papa-francesco_20171224_omelia-natale.pdf)

Ron Rolheiser, OMI, “Searching for the Voice of God” - <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/04252021>

Sister Marge Wissman in the 4/19/2021 Franciscan Action Network newsletter – <https://franciscanaction.org/news-resources/email-newsletter/>

Mary Ott’s 2020 service for Good Shepherd Sunday 2020, including Mary’s quotes from Susan Nagele’s homily for Good Shepherd Sunday 2020 at Catholic Women Preach -- <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/05032020>