

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

MAY 3, 2020

## MASS READINGS

MONDAY: ACTS 11:1-18, PS 42, JN 10:1-10

TUESDAY: ACTS 11:19-26, PS 87, JN 10:22-30

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 12:24-13:5A, PS 67, JN 12:44-50

THURSDAY: ACTS 13:13-25, PS 89, JN 13:16-20

FRIDAY: ACTS 13:26-33, PS 2, JN 14:1-6

SATURDAY: ACTS 13:44-52, PS 98, JN 14:7-14

**NEXT SUNDAY: FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER-RDGS: ACTS 14:21-27, PS 145, REV 21:1-5A, JN 13:31-33A, 34-35**

## MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS

TUESDAY: RAYMOND BROWN

WEDNESDAY: FERRITER FAMILY

THURSDAY: BUD & BRIDGET FITZSIMONS

FRIDAY: POOR SOULS

SATURDAY: RAYMOND BROWN

SUNDAY: FOR THE PARISH

## MEMORIAL FLOWERS

Those serving in our Armed Forces, especially those soldiers who have connections to our parish: Hildegard & Lewis Owen. Norma & Don Yantis. Pat & Gordon Yantis. William Brothers. Jim Hahn. Donald & David Bogan. Mary & Leonard Eckman. Donald Springgate.

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

*Jesus said:*

*"My sheep hear my voice;  
I know them, and they follow me.*

Probably one of the worst things which we may experience is that of being ignored. As children we may have been on the receiving end of the snubs of playmates who decided, in their typical cruelty to inflict upon us the curse of invisibility. Even as adults we may find ourselves on the receiving end of "cold shoulders" and the like. Or, worse, we may have been the ones providing this treatment for others. In either case it is not a pleasant experience. At the heart of such an experience is the thought that we do not matter, that we are not there and therefore, not to be bothered with. This sentiment runs contrary to the very heart of who we are as a child of God for he himself declares that you DO matter. In today's gospel Jesus declares just that when he reminds us that he hears our voices, and not just our voices but our very sighs, our longings our cries for love and understanding. During this jubilee of mercy we especially call to mind the words of our savior who bids us, "come unto me...". In prayer, fasting and works of mercy we find ourselves doing just that. In prayer we send our cries aloft confident that our Savior knows our voice and in turn we know his as he responds through Word and Sacrament through the contemplation we then are encouraged to share with one another. In prayer we receive guidance, consolation, understanding, reproving if necessary, and all manner of attention, letting us know that we do indeed matter. In fasting we demonstrate just how much we matter by selecting and using only those things, and in their appropriate fashion, which will obtain for us the greater blessing and graces of the Kingdom our Shepherd bids us seek first. In works of mercy we return to the father, through our neighbor, the belief that all of us truly matter and sons and daughter of a loving Father and that serving, rather than being served, is the precise way in which the Son wants us to demonstrate that same mercy that led him to Calvary for our sins and our salvation. Assured of a constant hearing we daily turn to the Lord by way of these three pillars of the interior life and come to realize that value we have in the Father's eyes and begin to reflect that value in the way we live and love.

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### THE SHEPHERD KING OF ISRAEL

Psalm 23:1 - Psalm 23:6.

The king who had been the shepherd-boy, and had been taken from the quiet sheep-cotes to rule over Israel, sings this little psalm of Him who is the true Shepherd and King of men. We do not know at what period of David's life it was written, but it sounds as if it were the work of his later years. There is a fullness of experience about it, and a tone of subdued, quiet confidence which speaks of a heart mellowed by years, and of a faith made sober by many a trial. A young man would not write so calmly, and a life which was just opening would not afford material for such a record of God's guardianship in all changing circumstances.

If, then, we think of the psalm as the work of David's later years, is it not very beautiful to see the old king looking back with such vivid and loving remembrance to his childhood's occupation, and bringing up again to memory in his palace the green valleys, the gentle streams, the dark glens where he had led his flocks in the old days; very beautiful to see him traversing all the stormy years of warfare and rebellion, of crime and sorrow, which lay between, and finding in all God's guardian presence and gracious guidance? The faith which looks back and says, 'It is all very good,' is not less than that which looks forward and says, 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'

There is nothing difficult of understanding in the psalm. The train of thought is clear and obvious. The experiences which it details are common, the emotions it expresses simple and familiar. The tears that have been dried, the fears that have been dissipated, by this old song; the love and thankfulness which have found in them their best expression, prove the worth of its simple words. It lives in most of our memories. Let us try to vivify it in our hearts, by pondering it for a little while together now.

The psalm falls into two halves, in both of which the same general thought of God's guardian care is presented, though under different illustrations, and with some variety of detail. The first half sets Him forth as a shepherd, and us as the sheep of His pasture. The second gives Him as the Host, and us as the guests at His table, and the dwellers in His house.

First, then, consider that picture of the divine Shepherd and His leading of His flock.

It occupies the first four verses of the psalm. There is a double progress of thought in it. It rises, from memories of the past, and experiences of the present care of God, to hope for the future. 'The Lord is my Shepherd'-I will fear no evil.' Then besides this progress from what was and is, to what will be, there is another string, so to speak, on which the gems are threaded. The various methods of God's leading of His flock, or rather, we should say, the various regions into which He leads them, are described in order. These are Rest, Work, Sorrow-and this series is so combined with the order of time already adverted to, as that the past and the present are considered as the regions of rest and of work, while the future is anticipated as having in it the valley of the shadow of death.

First, God leads His sheep into rest. 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, He leadeth me beside the still waters.' It is the hot noon-tide, and the desert lies baking in the awful glare, and every stone on the hills of Judaea burns the foot that touches it. But in that panting, breathless hour, here is a little green glen, with a quiet brooklet, and moist lush herb-age all along its course, and great stones that fling a black shadow over the dewy grass at their base; and there would the shepherd lead his flock, while the sunbeams, like swords,' are piercing everything beyond that hidden covert. Sweet silence broods there, The sheep feed and drink, and couch in cool lairs till he calls them forth again. So God leads His children.

The psalm puts the rest and refreshment first, as being the most marked characteristic of God's dealings. After all, it is so. The years are years of unbroken continuity of outward blessings. The reign of afflictions is ordinarily measured by days. 'Weeping endures for a night.' It is a rainy climate where half the days have rain in them; and that is an unusually troubled life of which it can with any truth be affirmed that there has been as much darkness as sunshine in it.

But it is not mainly of outward blessings that the Psalmist is thinking. They are precious chiefly as emblems of the better spiritual gifts; and it is not an accommodation of his words, but is the appreciation of their truest spirit, when we look upon them, as the instinct of devout hearts has ever done, as expressing both God's gift of temporal mercies, and His gift of spiritual good, of which higher gift all the lower are meant to be significant and symbolic. Thus regarded, the image describes the sweet rest of the soul in communion with God, in whom alone the hungry heart finds food that satisfies, and from whom alone the thirsty soul drinks draughts deep and limpid enough.

This rest and refreshment has for its consequence the restoration of the soul, which includes in it both the invigoration of the natural life by the outward sort of these blessings, and the quickening and restoration of the spiritual life by the inward feeding upon God and repose in Him.

The soul thus restored is then led on another stage; 'He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake,'-that is to say, God guides us into work.

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The quiet mercies of the preceding verse are not in themselves the end of our Shepherd's guidance; they are means to an end, and that is work. Life is not a fold for the sheep to lie down in, but a road for them to walk on. All our blessings of every sort are indeed given us for our delight. They will never fit us for the duties for which they are intended to prepare us, unless they first be thoroughly enjoyed. The highest good they yield is only reached through the lower one. But, then, when joy fills the heart, and life is bounding in the veins, we have to learn that these are granted, not for pleasure only, but for pleasure in order to power. We get them, not to let them pass away like waste steam puffed into empty air, but that we may use them to drive the wheels of life. The waters of happiness are not for a luxurious bath where a man may lie, till, like flax steeped too long, the very fibre be rotted out of him; a quick plunge will brace him, and he will come out refreshed for work. Rest is to fit for work, work is to sweeten rest.

All this is emphatically true of the spiritual life. Its seasons of communion, its hours on the mount, are to prepare for the sore sad work in the plain; and he is not the wisest disciple who tries to make the Mount of Transfiguration the abiding place for himself and his Lord.

It is not well that our chief object should be to enjoy the consolations of religion; it is better to seek first to do the duties enjoined by religion. Our first question should be, not, How may I enjoy God? but, How may I glorify Him? 'A single eye to His glory' means that even our comfort and joy in religious exercises shall be subordinated, and {if need were} postponed, to the doing of His will. While, on the one hand, there is no more certain means of enjoying Him than that of humbly seeking to walk in the ways of His commandments, on the other hand, there is nothing more evanescent in its nature than a mere emotion, even though it be that of joy in God, unless it be turned into a spring of action for God. Such emotions, like photographs, vanish from the heart unless they be fixed. Work for God is the way to fix them. Joy in God is the strength of work for God, but work for God is the perpetuation of joy in God.

Here is the figurative expression of the great evangelical principle, that works of righteousness must follow, not precede, the restoration of the soul. We are justified not by works, but for works, or, as the Apostle puts it in a passage which sounds like an echo of this psalm, we are 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.' The basis of obedience is the sense of salvation. We work not for the assurance of acceptance and forgiveness, but from it. First the restored soul, then the paths of righteousness for His name's sake who has restored me, and restored me that I may be like Him.

But there is yet another region through which the varied experience of the Christian carries him, besides those of rest and of work. God leads His people through sorrow. 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.'

The 'valley of the shadow of death' does not only mean the dark approach to the dark dissolution of soul and body, but any and every gloomy valley of weeping through which we have to pass. Such sunless gorges we have all to traverse at some time or other. It is striking that the Psalmist puts the sorrow, which is as certainly characteristic of our lot as the rest or the work, into the future. Looking back he sees none. Memory has softened down all the past into one uniform tone, as the mellowing distance wraps in one solemn purple the mountains which, when close to them, have many a barren rock and gloomy rift, All behind is good. And, building on this hope, he looks forward with calmness, and feels that no evil shall befall.

But it is never given to human heart to meditate of the future without some foreboding. And when 'Hope enchanted smiles,' with the light of the future in her blue eyes, there is ever something awful in their depths, as if they saw some dark visions behind the beauty. Some evils may come; some will probably come; one at least is sure to come. However bright may be the path, somewhere on it, perhaps just round that turning, sits the 'shadow feared of man.' So there is never hope only in any heart that wisely considers the future. But to the Christian heart there may be this—the conviction that sorrow, when it comes, will not harm, because God will be with us; and the conviction that the Hand which guides us into the dark valley, will guide us through it and up out of it. Yes, strange as it may sound, the presence of Him who sends the sorrow is the best help to bear it. The assurance that the Hand which strikes is the Hand which binds up, makes the stroke a blessing, sucks the poison out of the wound of sorrow, and turns the rod which smites into the staff to lean on.

The second portion of this psalm gives us substantially the same thoughts under a different image. It considers God as the host, and us as the guests at His table and the dwellers in His house.

In this illustration, which includes the remaining verses, we have, as before, the food and rest, the journey and the suffering. We have also, as before, memory and present experience issuing in hope. But it is all intensified. The necessity and the mercy are alike presented in brighter colours; the want is greater, the supply greater, the hope for the future on earth brighter; and, above all, while the former set of images stopped at the side of the grave, and simply refused to fear, here the vision goes on beyond the earthly end; and as the hope comes brightly out, that all the weary wanderings will end in the peace of the Father's house, the absence of fear is changed into the presence of triumphant confidence, and the resignation which, at the most, simply bore to look unflinching into the depth of the narrow house, becomes the faith which plainly sees the open gate of the everlasting home.

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God supplies our wants in the very midst of strife. 'Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over.' Before, it was food and rest first, work afterwards. Now it is more than work-it is conflict. And the mercy is more strikingly portrayed, as being granted not only before toil, but in warfare. Life is a sore fight; but to the Christian man, in spite of all the tumult, life is a festal banquet. There stand the enemies, ringing him round with cruel eyes, waiting to be let slip upon him like eager dogs round the poor beast of the chase. But for all that, here is spread a table in the wilderness, made ready by invisible hands; and the grim-eyed foe is held back in the leash till the servant of God has fed and been strengthened. This is our condition-always the foe, always the table.

What sort of a meal should that be? The soldiers who eat and drink, and are drunken in the presence of the enemy, like the Saxons before Hastings, what will become of them? Drink the cup of gladness, as men do when their foe is at their side, looking askance over the rim, and with one hand on the sword, 'ready, aye ready,' against treachery and surprise. But the presence of the danger should make the feast more enjoyable too, by the moderation it enforces, and by the contrast it affords-as to sailors on shore, or soldiers in a truce. Joy may grow on the very face of danger, as a slender rose-bush flings its bright sprays and fragrant blossoms over the lip of a cataract; and that not the wild mirth of men in a pestilence, with their 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,' but the simple-hearted gladness of those who have preserved the invaluable childhood gift of living in the present moment, because they know that to-morrow will bring God, whatever it brings, and not take away His care and love, whatever it takes away.

This, then, is the form under which the experience of the past is presented in the second portion, -joy in conflict, rest and food even in the strife. Upon that there is built a hope which transcends that in the previous portion of the psalm. As to this life, 'Goodness and mercy shall follow us.' This is more than 'I will fear no evil.' That said, sorrow is not evil if God be with us. This says, sorrow is mercy. The one is hope looking mainly at outward circumstances, the other is hope learning the spirit and meaning of them all. These two angels of God-Goodness and Mercy-shall follow and encamp around the pilgrim. The enemies whom God held back while he feasted, may pursue, but will not overtake him. They will be distanced sooner or later; but the white wings of these messengers of the covenant will never be far away from the journeying child, and the air will often be filled with the music of their comings, and their celestial weapons will glance around him in all the fight, and their soft arms will bear him up over all the rough ways, and up higher at last to the throne.

So much for the earthly future. But higher than all that rises the confidence of the closing words, 'I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.' This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future, and the one great lesson taught us by all the vicissitudes of life. The sorrows and the joys, the journeying and the rest, the temporary repose and the frequent struggles, all these should make us sure that there is an end which will interpret them all, to which they all point, for which they may all prepare. We get the table in the wilderness here. It is as when the son of some great king comes back from foreign soil to his father's dominions, and is welcomed at every stage in his journey to the capital with pomp of festival, and messengers from the throne, until he enters at last his palace home, where the travel-stained robe is laid aside, and he sits down with his father at his table. God provides for us here in the presence of our enemies; it is wilderness food we get, manna from heaven, and water from the rock. We eat in haste, staff in hand, and standing round the meal. But yonder we sit down with the Shepherd, the Master of the house, at His table in His kingdom. We put off the pilgrim-dress, and put on the royal robe; we lay aside the sword, and clasp the palm. Far off, and lost to sight, are all the enemies. We fear no change. We 'go no more out.'

The sheep are led by many a way, sometimes through sweet meadows, sometimes limping along sharp-flinted, dusty highways, sometimes high up over rough, rocky mountain-passes, sometimes down through deep gorges, with no sunshine in their gloom; but they are ever being led to one place, and when the hot day is over they are gathered into one fold, and the sinking sun sees them safe, where no wolf can come, nor any robber climb up any more, but all shall rest for ever under the Shepherd's eye.

Brethren! can you take this psalm for yours? Have you returned unto Christ, the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls? Oh! let Him, the Shepherd of Israel, and the Lamb of God, one of the fold and yet the Guide and Defender of it, human and divine, bear you away from the dreary wilderness whither He has come seeking you. He will carry you rejoicing to the fold, if only you will trust yourselves to His gentle arm. He will restore your soul. He will lead you and keep you from all dangers, guard you from every sin, strengthen you when you come to die, and bring you to the fair plains beyond that narrow gorge of frowning rock. Then this sweet psalm shall receive its highest fulfillment, for then 'they shall hunger no more, neither shall they thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe all tears from their eyes.'



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### **The King of Love My Shepherd Is**

By: Henry W. Baker

The King of love my shepherd is,  
Whose goodness faileth never;  
I nothing lack if I am his  
And he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,  
My ransomed soul he leadeth  
And, where the verdant pastures grow,  
With food celestial feedeth.

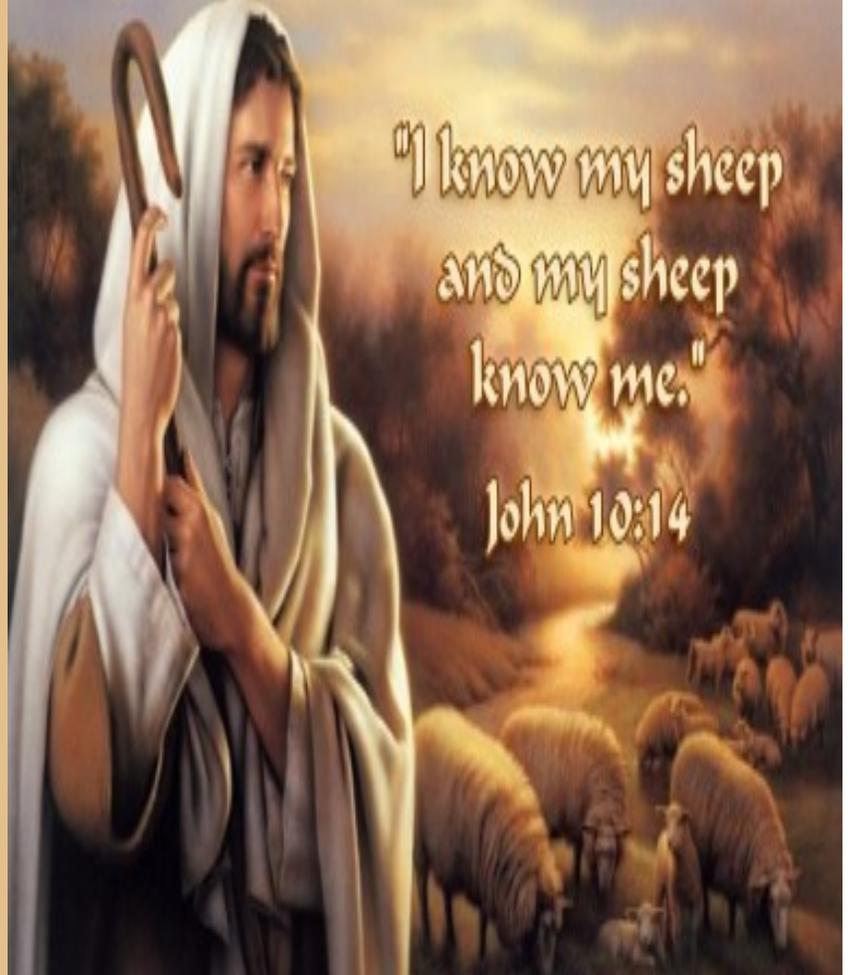
Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,  
But yet in love he sought me  
And on his shoulder gently laid  
And home rejoicing brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill  
With thee, dear Lord, beside me,  
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,  
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spreadst a table in my sight;  
Thine unction grace bestoweth;  
And, oh, what transport of delight  
From thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days  
Thy goodness faileth never.

Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise  
Within thy house forever.



"I know my sheep  
and my sheep  
know me."

John 10:14

**"...the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice. But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." [John 10:3-5](#)**

What are you most familiar with in life? What voice or voices echo in your mind most of the time? There are many influences we receive on a regular basis. Some are good and some are not so good. Often times we can talk ourselves into believing that the many "voices" or influences that we encounter on a daily basis do not affect us. We are pressured by the voice of the media, pop culture, love of money, a desire for recognition and so much more. These are powerful influences and, whether we want to believe it or not, they do affect us.

The Gospel above gives us insight into this internal struggle in that it contrasts the voice of the Shepherd with the voice of a stranger. The sheep are easily taught and conditioned. They learn the voice of their shepherd because it was common practice for shepherds to regularly speak to their sheep. Once the sheep became used to the shepherd's voice, they would turn and follow him when he called.

So it is with us. We will follow the voice of that which we are most familiar. Whatever it is that we immerse ourselves in each and every day will grow on us and draw us, even unknowingly, to follow.

This begs the question, "What are you most familiar with?" Ideally, we spend sufficient time in God's Word, learning His language, tone and voice. Ideally, we dedicate some portion of our day, every day, to silent contemplation of God. As we do this, we build a habit of hearing Him speak and we become comfortable with and comforted by His voice.

Once this habit is established in us, it will be much easier to go about our busy day hearing God whenever He chooses to speak. We will immediately recognize it is Him and we will follow.

Reflect, today, upon that which calls to you the loudest. Don't let the many other voices in our world drown out God's voice. Instead, prepare yourself for the moments He chooses to speak. And when He does speak, let that voice grab your attention so that you can follow.

*Lord, help me to know and love Your gentle voice throughout my daily life. May that voice overwhelm all others that compete for my attention. I choose You, dear Lord, as my one Shepherd and guide. Jesus, I trust in You.*