

Reflections from the Upper Room:

for the Pastoral Musician

Sunday, May 3, 2020

Reflections for the 4th Sunday of Easter

**By: Joan Best Seamon, Pastoral Associate for Liturgical Music,
The Catholic Community of St. Matthias, Somerset**

"The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly dies for his flock, Alleluia...."

- Communion Antiphon, 4th Sunday of Easter

Today is the 4th Sunday of Easter, often referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday. For the first time in this Easter season, the Gospel, John 10:1-10, does not tell a resurrection appearance story. Rather, we hear a parable from Jesus himself, which is known as the beginning of the "Good Shepherd" discourse.



Jesus says, *"I am the Gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."* Jesus is the entrance to the sheepfold, which was a walled structure topped with briars to keep out predators. It had only one entrance—its gate—and many shepherds would share the same sheepfold. But when the shepherd called, every sheep knew the voice of its own shepherd.

I think it is safe to say that very few of us have ever met a shepherd. Shepherding is one of the oldest occupations in the world. There are still shepherds today, from the mountains of the American West to the highlands of Peru and Chile, tending flocks of thousands of sheep. It is hard, lonely work. A shepherd may go for days without seeing another human being—sounds familiar these days, doesn't it?

The very first shepherd in the Bible was Abel, Cain's brother. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were shepherds. And who were the very first persons to hear about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem? The shepherds, *"keeping the night watch over their flocks."* (Luke:2).

King David was a shepherd, and the Responsorial Psalm for this Sunday, Psalm 23, is attributed to him. No matter how many times I play and sing this psalm, during the liturgical year or at funerals, it never fails to move and inspire me. When I asked our music ministers recently what particular scripture verses were helping them through these troubled times, many replied with verses from Psalm 23.

"The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want... Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil.....only goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life."

The words of this beloved psalm take on a whole new meaning for us during this challenging time, don't they? The message is enduring—Christ is our Shepherd. Instead of listening to the

distorted voices of the world in this time of confusion and despair, we need only to listen to His voice, which alone will bring us comfort to “revive our drooping spirits.” Christ is our true shepherd, who protects the sheep, suffers for our sake, and leads us to life.

For many of us, this weekend would have been our parish celebration of First Eucharist. Our churches would have been filled with much joy!

We have many people to pray for these days, the blessed souls of our faithful departed, our first responders and health care professionals, our leaders. Let’s also include those families and those children who were so looking forward to First Communion, a memorable day on their sacramental journeys. May we celebrate fully when we can do so safely, together, with glorious music!

Joan Best Seamon

Selected Reflection Music

Here are some beautiful settings of Psalm 23 for you to enjoy....

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

By: John Rutter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlST0WHk4ug>

With a Shepherd's Care

By: James Chepponis

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAL_cTdDpY

Contributor Introduction

Joan Best Seamon has been the Pastoral Associate for Liturgical Music at St. Matthias Church since 1978. Joan earned her Bachelor of Music Education degree from Douglass College and a Masters of Music History and Theory degree from Rutgers University. She is a long-time member of the Executive Board of the Metuchen Chapter of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians.

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