

Reflection on the Gospel-4th Sunday of Easter Year B

John 10:11-18)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

This year we celebrate World Earth Day on Good Shepherd Sunday. The liturgy invites us to reflect on Jesus as the noble or good shepherd of the believing community. "Shepherd" in its literal sense is not really part of our 21st century vocabulary, and yet we use it metaphorically, as a verb or as a noun. Its verbal form connotes care and compassion, protection, guidance and tender relationship. In John's gospel, Jesus rightly claims for himself the title "good shepherd". He contrasts the good shepherd or leader with the leader that fails to care for the flock. Knowing one's sheep, staying with them in the face of mortal danger and being prepared to die for them are marks of the good shepherd.

There are echoes here of the Hebrew Scriptures, particularly of Ezekiel 34 where the "shepherd/sheep" metaphor describes the leaders of Israel in their relationships with the people. There are likewise echoes of an early second century description of the Emperor Tiberius in whose reign Jesus of Nazareth was executed, precisely because he did not abandon his "flock". The Roman historian Suetonius has this to say of Tiberius: "To the governors who recommended burdensome taxes for his provinces, he wrote in answer that it was the part of a good shepherd to shear his flock, not skin it" (Suetonius, Life of Tiberius 32.2).

In the pre-industrial biblical world and early centuries of the Common Era, the "shepherd/sheep" metaphor was heard by an audience that enjoyed a much closer relationship with sheep and their human carers than do most people today. In my country, for instance, there are 71 million sheep and almost 25 million people. In other words, the ovine inhabitants of Australia outnumber the human by almost three to one. Yet most of our highly urbanised human population knows its sheep only in their disembodied forms. The human-ovine relationship is, for the most part, reduced to that of consumer and consumed. Sheep are valued, not for their intrinsic goodness as creations of a loving God, but rather as commodities that provide food and clothing for the human population. We now know that modern domesticated sheep evolved from creatures that pre-date modern humans. We might take time to consider the implications of this for our relationship with the other-than-human inhabitants of our planetary home.

Celebrating World Earth Day on Good Shepherd Sunday provides us with an opportunity to move beyond our human-centred views of the world and our human-centred interpretations of our sacred texts. We might hear a call to value the realities that underpin gospel images such as the Good Shepherd/sheep metaphor. We might also hear a call to expand our appreciation of all the inhabitants of our planet. To be good shepherds in our time is to embrace the whole Earth Community with reverence and compassion.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER—YEAR B



ST ALIPIUS PARISH, BALLARAT EAST

Including St Peter & Paul's, Buninyong

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MASS TIMETABLE FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING MONDAY, 23RD APRIL 2018

MONDAY:	No Mass
TUESDAY:	No Mass
WEDNESDAY:	9.15 am ANZAC Day Mass at Cathedral
THURSDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church
FRIDAY:	9.30 am in Parish Church

NEXT WEEKEND'S MASSES

ST. ALIPIUS	SAT	6.00 PM
	SUN	9.00 AM
BUNINYONG	SUN	10.30 AM

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER—YEAR B

READINGS	First: Acts 9:26-31
	Second: 1 John 3:18-24
	Gospel: John 15:1-8

RECENT DEATHS: Sr Dominic Foley, RSJ; Leonard McLachlan (brother of Dianne Edgar).

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE SICK: Nathan Cambell, Denise Learmonth, Cath Wheelahan, Terry McGarry, Kevin Walsh, Peter Clohesy, Frank Nolan (Buninyong), Mary Barnett, Fiona Dickinson, Carmel Doherty, Pauline Murphy, Maria Wilson, Aurora Ferrer, Patricia Harman, Leonie Sinnot, John Darroch.

COUNTING TEAMS:

This Week: **Team 11:** E. Kennedy ©, C. Stewart.

Next Week: **Team 12:** K. Bevelander ©, M. Liston, G. Maguire.

COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND:

PARISH:	Envelopes:	\$ 812.70
	Loose:	\$ 150.00
	Easter	\$ 89.00
	Direct Debits:	\$ 465.00
		\$ 1,516.70

PRESBYTERY: \$ 1,004.05



REFRESH OPPORTUNITY FOR SPECIAL MINISTERS

Thursday, 26th April, 3.45 to 5.30 pm in the Church. A number of our teachers are wishing to become Special Ministers of the Eucharist. Any parishioners wishing to support and join them at a refresh are welcome to attend.

WELCOME TO JESSIE BANEZ

We welcome Jessie Banez to our parish this weekend. Jessie is in formation for Priesthood at the Seminary. He and several other students are visiting our diocese to share their thoughts on vocation, on this, Good Shepherd Sunday.

MOTHER'S DAY MASS—MAY 13TH

We celebrate Mother's Day this year on May 13. On this day our parish 10.30 am Mass will, as usual, recognize and prayerfully thank all Mothers—those among us and those who live with God.

This year, we are planning to respectfully acknowledge in a more focused way the sufferings and strengths of the Mothers of our parish, past and present, especially those whose children were abused in this parish. In preparation, we will hold two short gatherings of Mothers where we will share thoughts, and plan prayers for this Mass over a cup of tea. We warmly invite all Mothers to assist us in planning this Mass. If you would like to be involved in the planning for this acknowledgment, please phone Karen on 0407 820 622. There will be volunteer drivers who are very happy to pick you up and take you home afterwards. Please spread the word to other Mothers and families who no longer have contact with the parish.

PUBLICATIONS

Copies of St Vincent de Paul's publications, *the Record* and *National Overview 2017 Health & Dignity*, and the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat's *Our Diocesan Community* are available at the back of the Church.

PLENARY COUNCIL 2020

Everyone is invited to reflect on the question: "What do you think God is asking of us in Australia?" www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au.

To begin our preparation for this time of dialogue and discernment amongst all members of the Church in Australia, the Diocese of Ballarat will commence by *Praying Towards 2020* (April 21st—May 6th). In Ballarat City there will be events during the week of April 29th-May 5th to which all parishioners will be invited.

As part of the Plenary Council 2020, four Redemptorist Priests will be available for Mass, talks and visitations in our parish from Monday, April 30 to Friday, May 6. See schedule below:

Mon, April 30	9.30 am Mass in Parish Church followed by Talk on Prayer 2.00—3.30 pm Prayer at St Peter & Paul's Buninyong
Tue, May 1	9.30 am Mass in Parish Church followed by Talk 2.00—3.30 pm Talk/Prayer at St Peter & Paul's Buninyong
Wed, May 2	10.00 am and 7.00 pm Gathering at Cathedral Hall for Plenary Council discussion.
Thu, May 3	9.30 am Mass in Parish Church followed by Reflection and Prayer
Fri, May 4	9.30 am Mass in Parish Church followed by Prayer

If you would like a house visit - chat and blessing – from our visiting priests, please place your name, phone number and address on the sheet at the back of the Church.

SOUP BUS—NEEDS YOUR HELP!

The Ballarat Soup Bus provides meals 5 nights per week to the homeless and anyone in need. This non-government funded program relies on donations and volunteers. More information about the Soup Bus is available on the Notice Board in the foyer of the Church, online at ontrackfoundation.org.au or by contacting Colleen on 0419 504 029. Our meals are presently served at the Senior Citizens rooms in the Little Bridge Street carpark. Very shortly there will be 2 additional services as the buses will be on the road.

We urgently need donations of **1 Litre Long Life Milk and Long Life Custard** as these items are always in short supply. If you are able to assist please bring and place items in the tub near the Piety Stall. All donations are very gratefully accepted.