

Reflection on the Gospel – Easter 4A (John 10:1-10)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Sheep were domesticated in Palestine some eight thousand years ago. In biblical times, shepherds would lead their sheep out to graze by day and bring them by night to a communal enclosure or sheepfold, the entrance to which was guarded by a gatekeeper. Shepherds knew their sheep and their sheep knew them. Thieves would have to scale the wall of the enclosure and watch for the chance to get away with a few of the sheep. The loss of even a few sheep was a deeply personal loss for the shepherd and the shepherd's family. Furthermore, the personal relationship between sheep and shepherd made theft a traumatizing experience for the sheep. Little wonder that the biblical tradition is replete with ovine images.

In John 10, Jesus directs a parabolic image of sheep and shepherds and thieves to the religious authorities of the previous chapter. They fail to understand, mainly because they are hostile and choose not to understand. While they claim to shepherd God's people, they do not even know them and have no capacity to lead them. Jesus is, by contrast, both shepherd and gate for the sheep: such are his identity claims. The former claim becomes explicit later in the chapter when he states, "I am the good shepherd." It follows his twice repeated claim, "I am the gate". The "I am" in these claims echoes God's self-revelation to Moses in the burning bush. Jesus contrasts the access he provides as "the gate" with the unauthorized access gained by others "who have come before" him, namely the religious authorities. They gain access to the sheepfold on false pretences and lead God's flock into pastures that fail to satisfy.

In Psalm 23, God is the shepherd of Israel who leads the people into nourishing pastures and restores life to the depths of their *nephesh* or being. *Nephesh* is the Hebrew word used in Genesis 2 for the life that God breathes into all beings. God leads the people in the way of justice or righteousness. Psalm 118 sings of God's gate through which the just or righteous will enter and give thanks. As the gate to the little sheepfold, Jesus is the way into safety and the way out to life-restoring pastures. In other words, he is the gate to abundant life. As shepherd, he monitors the movement of the sheep so that they are not tempted to stray along the paths of unrighteousness and destruction.

Finally, Jesus makes a claim about his mission: "I have come that they (the sheep) may have life and have it abundantly". This has a particular resonance at a time when so many lives are threatened by Coronavirus and when life has changed dramatically for the whole Earth community. Abundant life for all is our deepest desire and we must search to discover what that means in uncharted territory. As usual, the gospel text is multi-layered. The images pulsate with life and energy. They invite to vigilance on the one hand and hope on the other. They offer yet another way of celebrating Easter.

ST ALIPIUS' PARISH — BALLARAT EAST & BUNINYONG FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER — YEAR A, 3RD MAY 2020

St Alipius' Parish Church
82 Victoria Street, BALLARAT EAST 3350

SS Peter & Paul's Church
701 Fiskens St, BUNINYONG 3357

*Our parish is committed to the safety, wellbeing and dignity
of all children and vulnerable adults.*

*St Alipius' Parish acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of this
land and we pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging.*

Parish Office & Presbytery: 84 Victoria Street, Ballarat East 3350

Hours: 9.30am - 1.30pm Tues, Thurs, Fri
Telephone: 5332 6611
Email: ballarateast@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Parish Website: www.ballarat.catholic.org.au
SAP Liturgy website: www.sapliturgy.net.au
SAP Liturgy email: sapliturgy@gmail.com

Parish Priest: Fr. Jorge De Chavez OSJ
In Residence: Fr. Eladio Lizada OSJ
Parish Coordinator: Lucy O'Beirne
Finance Officer: Kerrie McTigue

Funeral Ministry: Carmel Flynn & Kathy Curran
Child Safety Officer: Roxanne Leed
Liturgy Coordinator: David Santamaria
Finance Committee Chair: Paul Jans

Some Online Mass Options & Resources for Prayer

- ◆ Ballarat Diocese Mass options: www.ballarat.catholic.org.au
- ◆ St Alipius' Parish Liturgy Website: www.sapliturgy.net.au
- ◆ Masses with Bishop Shane Mackinlay: www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au
- ◆ St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne: <https://www.melbournecatholic.org.au/Mass>

Prayer for Spiritual Communion:

"My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart ... I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You."
Pope Francis

Next Week's Readings: Fifth Sunday of Easter — Year A

First: Acts 6:1-7

Second: 1 Peter 2:4-9

Gospel: John 14:1-12

Recent Death: Carole Randle (Bairnsdale)

Anniversaries: Br. Ludwig Gunther (Pallottine Brother), Carole Steenhuis

Unwell: We pray for Kateri Byrnes, Carmel Doherty, Pat Hogan, Cathy Jones, Peter Martin, Letitia Simmons, Margie Wilmott and all who are unwell

Keeping in Touch — Fr Jorge

My dear people of God,

Fourth Sunday of Easter is Good Shepherd Sunday, it is the time when we pray for more vocations to the religious life and the priesthood and for all those who task of shepherding souls. The gospel today speaks about the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. This lovely image is very comforting at this challenging times we are confronting. In our isolation and hardships we are reminded this Sunday that we have The Good Shepherd in the person of Jesus who rose from the dead and he will lead us on to green pastures and fresh water. I Invite you all to offer prayers for those who are called to care for God's people, that they may be like Jesus The Good Shepherd who willingly lay down his life for the sheep. I Keep you all in my prayers and looking forward to see you. Best Regards, Fr. Jorge, OSJ

Position Available — Ballarat East Parish Coordinator

Applications are currently being sought for the position of Parish Coordinator. This is a part-time position that ensures the effective operation of the parish office by providing office coordination, reception and administrative assistance. A copy of the position description and application form are available on the parish [website](#). Applications close Friday 26th June.

St. Vincent de Paul Society Bread Run at St. Alipius

Free fresh bread available to people on Centrelink benefits and to all experiencing job loss, shorter hours, etc. This may be picked up each Monday night between 7.50 pm and 8.20 pm in the parish hall adjacent to the St. Alipius Church. Parking is via Hopetoun Street entrance. Bring own bags as no bags are supplied. Please pass on this information to any families experiencing difficulties at this time. For further information please ring Gavin 5334 7221 or Geoff 0413 840 835. Please also note: **SVDP Call Centre — 5334 2844 lines open 24/7**

Good Shepherd Sunday & World Day of Prayer for Vocations

May 3, 2020 (Fourth Sunday of Easter) is the World Day of Vocations. Pope Francis tells us, "Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm. We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the gaze of God in our lives" (message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations 2020). Let us pray for the young people in our community and in our families and circle of friends. May our prayers and presence reflect the gaze of love from the Lord to help them discover their vocation.

Online Liturgical Inculturation Seminar – Australian Catholic University

ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and the ACU Centre for Liturgy will welcome Rev. Professor Mark R. Francis csv as a guest lecturer for a new masters-level unit called: *THEL620 Special Studies in Theology: Liturgical Inculturation*. It will be offered as an online intensive on July 6, 7, 9 & 10 (with our professional learners joining the masters-students from 9am-12.30pm each of those days). We are keen to invite anyone who is interested to join this unit as a professional learning opportunity (not for credit and with no assessments to complete). For further details please visit our [website page](#). You can [register directly here](#).

Message from Pope Francis to Pray the Rosary in May

Pope Francis has asked Catholics to make a special effort to pray the Rosary during May and has composed two new prayers asking for Our Lady's intercession to help end the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information visit www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

Ballarat Diocese Lay Pastoral Ministry Program — now open for new participants

Low-cost online study and formation for lay workers in parish and other ministries - employed or volunteers. Sacraments, Scripture, Youth Ministry, Liturgy, Leadership and more. Study over 5 weeks per subject. Study Cycle 4 begins May 24. Registrations open now until May 13. More information at www.ballarat.catholic.org.au or contact Kim Butler ph. 0407 523 424, email kim.butler@ballarat.catholic.org.au.

Plenary Council 2020 Assembly 1 Postponed

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Plenary Council 2020 Assembly 1 scheduled for October in Adelaide, has been postponed. Read the full media release at <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/first-assembly-of-plenary-council-postponed/>. See a message from Bishop Paul on the diocesan website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au.

Caritas Free Online Concert starring Gary Pinto – May 9

On Saturday, May 9, Australian singer, songwriter and musician, Gary Pinto will lead a free online concert for Project Compassion to encourage everyone to stand in solidarity with those most vulnerable to COVID-19. For more information and to view the great artist line-up visit www.caritas.org.au/loungeroomsessions. To view the concert, supporters will need to register at www.livemusic2u.com/loungeroomsessions/.

Pentecost Pilgrimage

Catholics are invited to join others worldwide on a spiritual pilgrimage to Pentecost. Register for free to receive a series of talks which are uploaded twice a week from speakers around the world. Go to <https://www.pentecostpilgrimage.com/>

Heart to Heart e-Seminars

Archbishop Chris Prowse, Canberra-Goulburn Diocese, is presenting 30 minute e-seminars over four weeks, leading you into a deeper relationship with Christ during this time of isolation <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/hearttoheart/>

Planned Giving Envelopes and Other Offerings

Please post envelopes through the mail-slot of the presbytery. If you have any queries regarding Planned Giving, please contact:

Kerrie McTigue

Parish Finance Officer

Phone: (03) 5331 2933 — Email:

ballaratoffice@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Thank You to Those who Contributed to Last Week's Collections

Parish: Envelopes:	\$ 655.00
Loose:	\$ nil
Direct Debits:	<u>\$ 850.00</u>
	\$ 1505.00
Presbytery:	\$ 175.00