

Parishes of St Andrew's Cathedral and Our Lady of Good Counsel

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Dear Friends and Parishioners,

Even in lockdown the Paschal season moves on so swiftly! We are now into the month of May and we are midway through the Easter season. I really hope you are able to access the liturgical texts and if possible follow some of the many Masses which are being livestreamed, so that your connection to the rhythm of the liturgical year stays strong.

This Sunday is often called *Good Shepherd Sunday*, as the Gospel always comes from that part of the fourth Gospel where Jesus uses the images of Shepherd, Flocks and Sheepfold to reveal his truest, deepest identity and his mission of love. This Sunday he says to us:

***I am the Gate of the sheepfold...
anyone who enters through me will be safe.***

Some may find these Gospel words rather incongruous in the light of the pandemic ravaging the world at this time. Indeed you may have asked yourself where God is in all this; others may have challenged you, as a person of faith, to answer where God is in the midst of Covid 19.

Our Holy Father is clear and direct in his response to this question, and he is in harmony with the God revealed in the person of Jesus, shown in the Gospel: Covid 19, Pope Francis assures us, is **not** God's wrath being unleashed. Seeing God as a wrath ridden, vengeful omnipotent, whose anger at the world has just reached boiling point is too easy a solution or answer to the origins of this virus.

In time, we hope, the natural explanations for this virus will be made known and the reasons for its rapid spread accounted for.

For now we can trust the Gospel, and the words of the Holy Father that this not God's judgement upon us. Pope Francis goes further and says however that this situation does give **us** a chance to judge what is most important to us and to resolve how to act from now on.

We know Jesus in the Gospel is never recorded as having sent a plague or disaster. He actually rebuked his disciples when they wanted to call down fire and brimstone from heaven; he even rebuked Peter when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant in the garden of Gethsemane and healed the man.

Far from being a unpredictable, Herod-like figure, given to sudden and cruel treatment of his people, our God **is** Love, as St John declares definitively; and he knows this is true from his own experience. And don't we know it too, in our very depths? We walked in Holy Week with the God *who was rich but who became poor for our sake*. In this Paschal season we honour most deeply the truth that he expressed his love for us ultimately by suffering himself, by shedding his own blood, by taking any blame that was ours and wiping it away in his own blood. The blood and water flowing from his side on Calvary are the sources of life and not death for his people – Baptism and Eucharist. His is the blood of the New Covenant. He comes that we may *have life and have it to the full*.

Kevin

Live stream Mass: Bishop Stephen Robson shall be the celebrant for the livestream Mass this Sunday at 10.30am from Lawside Convent www.dunkelddiocese.co.uk. I shall celebrate Mass this Sunday in Our Lady of Good Counsel, in the light of the Easter Candle and I shall carry all of you with me as I do so, and all your loved ones and all those for whom you are praying, especially any of your families or loved ones who are directly affected by Covid 19, and all who are working in the medical/nursing fields, all NHS staff, all those who work in the many care homes and nursing homes; those who are going to extraordinary lengths to care for others and are keeping our essential services running, and all the parents and grandparents, teachers and carers.

I will celebrate the **Evening Prayer of the Church** for the Fourth Sunday of Easter at 4pm in the Cathedral, by the light of the Easter Candle. I'm attaching/enclosing a Word document with the text of the Evening Prayer if you'd like to share in it at home.

Our Prayers for those who have died recently: Monsignor Charles Hendry, Lawrence Kemlow, Catherine Garland, Miriam Jackson, James Lavery;

those whose anniversaries fall at this time: William Miller, Maria Ferrario, Stella Wilson, Albert Davidson, Hugh Connolly, William Pitcairn McGarry, Hilda McCann, Helen McCann, Alice McGarry, Joan Lithgow, Elizabeth McCluskey;

all those who are sick: Sharon McInally, Moira Wilkie, Natalia Lucka, Benedict Connery, Benedict Stephens, Gillian Steedman, Steven Kennedy, Cheryl Marshal, Sharon Davison, Aubrey McMullan, Sonya Rostan, Lily Jane Douglas, Alexander McNeil, Bridie Mossey, Sheila McCallum, Marie Manunga, Estelle Fox, Allison Matthew;

Follow the reflections and music during the week on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/StAndrewsRCDundee/>

Children's Liturgy: there is a resource on the Facebook Page each week for families who would like to celebrate a Children's Liturgy at home in these different times, as we try to continue to support our young people.

I have five copies of the latest **Sacred Heart Messenger** Magazine. If you would like one, please just call or email.

Your Offertory Contributions: Your contributions to the church during this time are especially appreciated – either through cash, cheque or standing order.

Keeping this Sunday holy with a Home Liturgy

Take time to *be still and know* that our Lord is with you.

A prayer to begin

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
though your people walk in the valley of darkness, no evil should they fear,
for they follow in faith the call of the Shepherd whom you have sent for their hope and strength.
Attune our minds to the sound of his voice, lead our steps in the path he has shown,
that we may know the strength of his outstretched arm and enjoy the light of your presence for ever.
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Read the Scriptures of the day

Acts of the Apostles 2:14. 36-41: Peter's Pentecost sermon, continued.

Psalms 23: *The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.*

1 Peter 2:20-25: *You have come back to the Shepherd of your souls.*

Alleluia

Gospel of John 10:1-10: *I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*

For reflection

The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is generally more familiar to us than the first image he gives in today's Gospel, that of himself as the gate of the sheepfold, really himself as the gateway to the Father. What he speaks of in these verses would be very familiar to his original audience though, of the sheepfold where various shepherds would take their sheep for the night's rest.

It was easier for the sheep to be kept safe from wild animals as well as thieves, when they were kept inside the stone walled corrals. In the morning the shepherds came back to the gatekeeper to claim their sheep. The sheep would recognise the voice of their own master, their own shepherd, and rejoin him for another day of grazing. Yet some seem to miss the point of the parable, so he explains his truth further, leading to the central verse, in the middle of the Gospel narrative, the tenth verse of the tenth chapter: *I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.*

What does *life to the full* mean? What does it mean in these present times? For the fourth evangelist, this life comes from being in union with the one who is both gate of the sheepfold and shepherd of the flock. But of course this Jesus is also the Lamb of God, the Lamb of the New Covenant, by whose wounds we are healed.

Pope Benedict XVI said: “The Word of God presents us with fascinating reminder that God is the Shepherd of humanity. This means that God wants life for us, he wants to guide us to good pastures where we can be nourished and rest. He does not want us to be lost and to perish, but to reach the destination of our journey which is the fullness of life itself. This is what every father and mother desires for their children: their good, their happiness and their fulfilment”.

In order to carry out this work of reconciliation, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had to become a Lamb, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Only in this way could he keep the marvellous promise of the Psalm: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psalm 23:6).

Intercessions

Let us pray for the unity of Christians, that all those for whom Jesus laid down his life may be gathered together into his one fold.

Let us pray for those who influence the destinies of the nations of the world, that, especially in these challenging times they may act as responsible stewards of the people and the power entrusted to them.

For Priestly Vocations, that the Good Shepherd may raise up in the Church ministers of Word and Sacrament, who will preside with care, lead with courage and serve with love.

For a renewal of the Vocation among us all in our parishes, that we may know God’s call to us and respond with generosity.

Take time to voice your own prayers then sum up with the **Our Father....**

A prayer to close

What love you have bestowed on us O God,
that we should be called your children,
born again in Christ by water and Spirit.
What love you have lavished on us,
that we should be gathered into the fold of a Shepherd
whose life is given freely for us.
Keep us safe, make us one,
and gather all your scattered children
into the One Fold of this One Shepherd. Amen.

