

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER— 11 MAY 2025



## COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,  
lead us to a share in the joys of heaven,  
so that the humble flock may reach  
where the brave Shepherd has gone before.  
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

An Australian sheep station can cover thousands of square kilometres and have tens of thousands of sheep. The person who manages the sheep is called a grazier. An Australian shepherd is a breed of dog. Today is called Good Shepherd Sunday. *I am the good shepherd*, says Jesus. It is an image which speaks of Jesus' concern for his sheep and self-sacrifice to keep them safe. Jesus knew Psalm 22/23 which calls God our shepherd who leads us to pastures, fresh and green, and gives us repose by restful waters. We have come to know and love these images, but they require a sharp dissociation from our Australian experience of sheep and sheep stations.

The intimacy which is implied in this imagery in the gospel – the sheep know the shepherd's voice, listen to him and follow him – is more appropriate to our relationship with a pet. Perhaps this is an entry point into today's metaphor.

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles**  
**13:14, 43–52**

Paul and Barnabas carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to the synagogue on the sabbath and took their seats.

When the meeting broke up, many Jews and devout converts joined Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with

them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God has given them.

The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly. 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said:

I have made you a light for the nations,  
so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'

It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.

But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

**Responsorial Psalm** **Ps 99:1–3, 5**

**R.** We are his people, the sheep of his flock.  
or

**R.** Alleluia.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.  
Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before him, singing for joy. **R**

Know that he, the Lord, is God.

He made us, we belong to him,  
we are his people, the sheep of his flock. **R**

Indeed, how good is the Lord,  
eternal his merciful love.

He is faithful from age to age. **R**

**First Reading**

Much has happened between last Sunday's story of the apostles' trial and today's account of the mission of Paul and Barnabas. Stephen has been stoned to death; Saul has had his conversion experience; the mission to the Gentiles, revealed to Peter, has begun; the apostle James, son of Zebedee, has been martyred; Herod has died; and Paul has been sent on mission with Barnabas.

In Antioch (southern Turkey), Paul and Barnabas connect first with the local Jewish community. We do not hear his lengthy address in the synagogue, but we see the response he gets. The initial enthusiasm of his Jewish hearers changes to hostility when jealous leaders contradict him.

Paul decides to focus his mission on the Gentiles who are grateful and very happy with this development. This is one of the most important new directions we see in the whole of the Acts of the Apostles. The light of Christ will shine for all nations, even to the ends of the earth.

The text is quite long, but there is a strong narrative thread and vigorous action. This invites an energetic and spirited delivery.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Psalm 99/100 is a short hymn of praise for God's faithfulness and merciful love. It picks up the image of God as the shepherd and the people as God's flock. This verse, used also for the response, sets us up to hear the words of the Gospel.

The cantor/reader should adopt a tone of 'gladness' – they too 'sing for joy'. There are just three short three-line verses. There is no need to rush.

**A reading from the book of the Apocalypse**  
**7:9, 14–17**

I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. One of the elders said to me, 'These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

**A reading from the holy Gospel**  
**according to John** **10:27–30**

Jesus said:

The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice;  
I know them and they follow me.  
I give them eternal life;  
they will never be lost  
and no one will ever steal them from me.  
The Father who gave them to me is greater than  
anyone, and no one can steal from the Father.  
The Father and I are one.'

**Second Reading**

An imaginative vision of the risen Christ enthroned in glory! One that brings comfort and consolation to persecuted Christians everywhere.

First, we have the immense crowd that is totally inclusive – people from every nation, race, tribe and language. There is an equal place for all with no discrimination. All are one in Christ.

These are the baptised, dressed in their white garments and holding palms of victory in their hands. Baptised into the death and resurrection of Christ, we all share his defeat of sin and death. This is vividly expressed in the first example of the 'clash of symbols': *washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb*.

Then the promise of protection from hunger and thirst is expressed in the second wonderful example of the 'clash of symbols': the Lamb will be their Shepherd! Thus this text also opens up the theme of the good shepherd which returns in the gospel.

This passage demands to be read with an expansive and poetic flair.

**Gospel**

The whole of John 10 develops the theme of Christ as the good shepherd. The Year A and B cycles in the Lectionary have longer excerpts. The idea of the sheep recognising the shepherd's voice recurs throughout the chapter. Hearing the shepherd's voice and following him is a beautiful expression of trust.

Earlier in the chapter, Jesus has contrasted the protective and self-giving shepherd with the hired hand who abandons the sheep if danger strikes. This idea too recurs. Those who follow the shepherd will never be lost or stolen.

Finally, the chapter concludes with an affirmation of Christ's oneness with the Father. Jesus is the good shepherd because the Lord God is the shepherd (Psalm 22/23) who gives the flock safe repose in fresh, green pastures. We fear no evil even in the valley of the shadow of death because the shepherd guides us on the right path. Christ and the Father are one in their care for us.

## BLESSING FOR EASTER

May God, who by the Resurrection of his Only Begotten Son  
was pleased to confer on us  
the gift of redemption and of adoption,  
give us gladness by his blessing.

**Amen.**

May he, by whose redeeming work  
we have received the gift of everlasting freedom,  
make us heirs to an eternal inheritance.

**Amen.**

And may we, who have already risen with Christ  
in Baptism through faith,  
by living in a right manner on this earth,  
be united with him in the homeland of heaven.

**Amen.**

And may the blessing of almighty God,  
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Easter Time, Roman Missal p. 712)

*An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.*

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### FIRST READING ( NRSV)

#### **A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43–52**

Paul and Barnabas went on from Perga  
and came to Antioch in Pisidia.  
On the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

When the meeting of the synagogue broke up,  
many Jews and devout converts to Judaism  
followed Paul and Barnabas,  
who spoke to them and urged them  
to continue in the grace of God.

The next sabbath almost the whole city  
gathered to hear the word of the Lord.  
But when the Jewish officials saw the crowds,  
they were filled with jealousy;  
and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul.

Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying,  
“It was necessary that the word of God  
should be spoken first to you.  
Since you reject it  
and judge yourselves to be unworthy of eternal life,  
we are now turning to the Gentiles.  
For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,  
‘I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,  
so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’”  
When the Gentiles heard this,  
they were glad and praised the word of the Lord;  
and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers.

Thus the word of the Lord spread throughout the region.  
But the officials incited the devout women of high standing  
and the leading men of the city,  
and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas,  
and drove them out of their region.  
So they shook the dust off their feet in protest against them,  
and went to Iconium.  
And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM ( NRSV)

**Psalm 100.1-2, 3, 5 (R.3c)**

**R.** We are God's people, the sheep of his flock.

or:

**R.** Alleluia! *(Two or three times)*

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

Worship the Lord with gladness;

come into his presence with singing. **R.**

Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. **R.**

For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,

and his faithfulness to all generations. **R.**

## SECOND READING ( NRSV)

**A reading from the book of Revelation 7:9, 14–17**

After this I, John, looked,  
and there was a great multitude that no one could count,  
from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages,  
standing before the throne and before the Lamb,  
robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.

And one of the elders then said to me,  
“These are they who have come out of the great ordeal;  
they have washed their robes  
and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

“For this reason they are before the throne of God,  
and worship him day and night within his temple,  
and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

“They will hunger no more, and thirst no more;  
the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;  
for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

## GOSPEL ( NRSV)

**A reading from the holy gospel according to John 10:27–30**

Jesus said:

“My sheep hear my voice.

I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.

No one will snatch them out of my hand.

what my Father has given me is greater than all else,

and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.

The Father and I are one.”