Fourth Week of Easter

## **Sunday 22 April – Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Scripture: Acts 4: 8-12; Psalm 117; 1 John 3: 1-2; John 10: 11-18

*Jesus said, ‘I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.’*

We do not know who the sheep Jesus is referring to here are. It may be Jesus alerting the Jews who would have heard this to the fact that he is also to be shepherd to the Gentiles. Some people say that it may be a prophecy related to the breaking up of the Body of Christ into denominations and his desire for their unity. Or it may relate to other religions who do not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God but whom Christ will somehow call into the eternal fold of the kingdom. What is clear is that Jesus’ mission is not exclusive but seeks to embrace as many people as possible.

* Who do you think are the sheep of other flocks?
* How comfortable are you with the idea of all sorts of other people being part of Christ’s flock?

Jesus is the Good Shepherd but he calls many others to share his work of gathering people into the fold. Today, we pray for those in ordained ministry – for those who work in mission and aid work – for those who serve God’s people on the margins - for all involved in caring for the ‘sheep of many flocks whom Christ came to save.

*KT*

## **Monday 23 April – St George, Martyr**

Scripture: Apocalypse 12: 10-12; Psalm 125; 2 Corinthians 4: 7-15 (other choices available) John 15: 18-21

*Jesus said, ‘If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you.’*

Churches dedicated to St George are recorded going back to the fourth century – all around the Middle East. It is believed that George was martyred for his faith as part of a persecution of Christians in the military service. What is interesting is that, though he was hated enough to be killed by Roman authorities, he is now honoured by Christians and Muslims and his feast day celebrated in both Western and Eastern Christian traditions. Someone despised and rejected like his Lord has become someone who unites people from all over the world.

* What do you know about the historic St George?
* Why do you think he is so often depicted as fighting a dragon?

Pray today for all the countries and causes who have St George as their patron. You can find some of them here: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronages_of_Saint_George>

*KT*

## **Tuesday 24 April (St Fidelis of Sigmaringen, St Adalbert of Prague)**

Scripture: Acts 11: 19-26; Psalm 86; John 10: 22-30

*The Jews gathered around him and said to Jesus, ‘How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.’*

The Jewish people were longing for the coming of the Messiah but expected someone who would leave no doubt about his identity. They had heard Jesus speak and had perhaps seen his miracles and felt that the evidence was stacking up – but they wanted to be sure. This is understandable. We all like to know where we stand and just a word or an action on Jesus’ part could settle things once and for all. The reality is, though, that even Jesus reassures them on this occasion, it is likely that in a month – or a year – or whenever – they would need still more. People are rarely convinced by just one thing.

* What helps you to have faith in Jesus?
* Was it a once-for-all thing that helped you to believe – or several things over a period of time?

Pray today for the people who long for a word or a sign that will convince them that Jesus is Lord and worth believing in. Pray that they will receive something that they can trust – even if it can never be the final answer.

KT

## **Wednesday 25 April – St Mark, Evangelist**

Scripture: 1 Peter 5: 5-14; Psalm 88; Mark 16: 15-20

*After the Lord Jesus had spoken to the disciples, he was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it.*

St Mark’s is the oldest of the gospels – though he, Matthew and Luke all seem to have had a shared source. The gospels do not set out just to be a record of Jesus’ life – they are designed to inspire faith in this man and to encourage people to share his story with others. It is the task he commissioned his first disciples to undertake – and one he passes on to everyone who comes to believe in him. But he does not just sit in heaven watching it happen – as Mark observes, Jesus’ disciples and friends spread the good news and the Lord himself works with us.

* How do you feel about being commissioned to tell others about Jesus?
* What difference does it make knowing that Jesus is working with you?

St Mark’s gospel is the shortest of the gospels. It is possible to read it in one sitting (around 45 minutes to an hour). If time permits, read it through today. If you can’t do it today, think about setting time aside with a coffee at the weekend to do so. And if that is not possible either – read it a couple of chapters at a time! This will help to give you a sense of the flow which we miss when reading extracts at Mass.

KT

## **Thursday 26 April**

Scripture: Acts 13: 13-25; Psalm 88; John 13: 16-20

*Jesus said, ‘Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.’*

There are some people who are clearly sent by the Lord into our lives. They bring life and energy and a feeling of being with someone with goodness at their heart. Some people are less obvious. They may be people on the margins – people we may find it hard to get along with – people with very different ideas to our own. These are more challenging ways in which Christ comes to us. The clue to identifying them is to listen to our hearts – to see how the Christ in us recognises the Christ in them.

* When have you had a clear sense of someone being sent by the Lord into your life?
* When have you met someone who it has been harder to recognise as sent by the Lord – and how did you respond?

Pray today for the willingness to be open to all who come in the name of the Lord and to welcome them into your life as you would the Lord.

KT

## **Friday 27 April**

Scripture: Acts 13: 26-33; Psalm 2; John 14: 1-6

*Jesus said, ‘If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.’*

This gospel is often used at funerals for the very good reason that it speaks of Jesus going to prepare a place in heaven for us – the hope we have for those who have died. It is a beautiful image and would have been reassuring for those who were with Jesus at the end of his earthly life and who would have felt lost and forsaken after his death and, even, his ascension. Jesus leaves many things and people behind – but only so that he can prepare a welcome for all who will follow his Way into eternity.

* When have you heard these words used at a funeral?
* What kind of place would you like Jesus to prepare for you?

Spend some time today thinking about Jesus’ promise. Play with ideas of what you would like the place Jesus is preparing for you to be like – rather like a couple dreaming of their home together! Thank the Lord for the hospitality he is preparing for you.

KT

## **Saturday 28 April (St Peter Chanel or St Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort)**

Scripture: Acts 13: 44-52; Psalm 97; John 14: 7-14

*Jesus said, ‘Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.’*

At first glance this seems a strange thing to say – how on earth could anyone do even greater works than Jesus himself? And yet, when we look at some of the things people have done in his name we see that they have touched more people or happened in places that Jesus never visited. Think of St Teresa of Calcutta, for example, how many lives were touched by her – and by the Sisters who continue their work. Or the missionaries who have taken the gospel out to countries Jesus probably never heard of during his time on earth. Or doctors and nurses – or teachers – artists and craftspeople – or…

* Who can you think of who has done great things in the name of the Lord? Even greater, perhaps, than Jesus during his earthly life?
* Would Jesus mind people doing even great things than he did on earth?

Spend some time thinking about people who have done – or who are doing – great things because of their faith in the Lord. Thank God for their witness and example. Ponder how they might inspire you to do the ordinary things in your own life in ways that extend the work of the Lord – even if you do not aspire to greatness!

KT