

We Respond

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ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 99)

ANTIPHON: We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

RESPONSE: **We are his people, the sheep of his flock.**

Or

Alleluia!

LECTOR: Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing for joy. **R.**

LECTOR: Know that he, the Lord, is God. He made us, we belong to him, we are his people, the sheep of his flock. **R.**

LECTOR: Indeed, how good is the Lord, eternal his merciful love. He is faithful from age to age. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

TODAY'S READINGS Acts 13:14, 43-52; Rev 7:9, 14-17; John 10:27-30

NEXT WEEK (5th Sunday of Easter, Year C) Acts 14:21-27; Ps 144; Rev 21:1-5; John 13:31-35

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*Blessed to be
part of the
flock*



8 May 2022 4th Sunday Easter Year C

The image of God as shepherd of his people is strong in both the Old and the New Testament. Indeed, one of the earliest and most loved images of Jesus in the early Church was of him as the Good Shepherd who so loves his sheep that he lays down his life for them.

In the Roman catacombs, the ancient cemeteries outside the city of Rome where the early Christian martyrs were buried, we find very early images of the Good Shepherd. He is shown carrying a lamb on his shoulders. Holiness, goodness and grace radiate from his youthful figure. His sheep gaze trustingly at him and graze peacefully in his care. They know him, they recognise his voice, and they know that he will protect them from danger. He knows each of them by name and will never desert them.

The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd must have been a great source of consolation for Christians in the face of persecution. Indeed, a common prayer in the early Church for those who had died was that they should be taken to heaven "borne on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd".

Two thousand years later, Christians continue to find the image of the Good Shepherd deeply consoling and comforting, especially in times of trouble and distress. Psalm 23 is one of the most loved and prayed of all the psalms, often used at

funerals. It speaks to us so powerfully of the unfailing tenderness and steadfast love with which God cares for us, individually and as a community. Psalm 100 proclaims his kindness and faithfulness and in it we rejoice that we are his people, the sheep of his flock.

But let us reflect for a moment about us as the sheep of his flock! Now, those of us who have grown up in the country and watched sheep dog trials, or waited on a country road while a flock of sheep is moved by a farmer and his sheep dogs from one side of the road to the other, know how stupid and wayward sheep can be and how much patience and skill it takes to manage them! Though we human beings are blessed with capacity for intelligence and insight, we too, like sheep, often behave in scatterbrained and foolish ways.

But no matter how foolish or scatterbrained or uncooperative we might be, our Good Shepherd shepherds us, looks out for us, comes to find us when we are lost, and carries us when we need to be carried. He loves us and cares for us with an everlasting love. How very blessed are we to be the sheep of his flock! May the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd remind us to keep our eyes on him, to listen to him, and to hold firm to our faith and our trust in him.

Anne Hunt

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