

The Order of Service for Home Worship

THE FOURTH SUNDAY *of* EASTER



Hymn: Thine for ever! God of love.

1. Thine for ever! God of love,
Hear us from thy throne above;
Thine for ever may we be
Here and in eternity.
2. Thine for ever! Lord of life,
Shield us through our earthly strife;
Thou the life, the truth, the way,
Guide us to the realms of day.
3. Thine for ever! O how blest
They who find in thee their rest!
Saviour, guardian, heavenly friend,
O defend us to the end.
4. Thine for ever! Shepherd, keep
Us thy frail and trembling sheep;
Safe within thy tender care,
Let us all thy goodness share.
5. Thine for ever! Thou our guide,
All our wants by thee supplied,
All our sins be thee forgiven,
Lead us, Lord, from earth to heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**
Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, all hearts are open to you. No secrets are hidden from you. Purify us with the fire of your Holy Spirit that we may love and worship you faithfully, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As we come into the presence of our heavenly Father let us seek his forgiveness of our sins that we may know his peace is our hearts.

Lord Jesus, you were sent to heal the contrite. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you came to call sinners. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you plead with us at the right hand of the Father. **Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Alleluia, alleluia, glory be to God on high;

Alleluia, to the Saviour who has gained the victory;

Alleluia to the Spirit, fount of love and sanctity;

Alleluia, Alleluia, to the Triune Majesty.

Collect: Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life: raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

9. 36-43

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, 'Please come to us without delay.' So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalms 23

Response: The lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.

The lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. (R)

Even though I walk through the darkest valley
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff – they comfort me. (R)

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. (R)

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long. (R)

A reading from the book of Revelation.

7. 9-17

After this I 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. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.' Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he 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.'

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

"My sheep hear my voice", says the Lord, "I know them and they follow me."

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to Saint John.

10. 22-30

Glory to you, O Lord.

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. 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.'

'This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Meditation: Since the very beginning of the Church Christians have used the image of the Good Shepherd when talking about Jesus. It is an image that people living in agricultural communities could easily understand. This image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is one that continues to resonate with us today. It is a timeless image. Each year the fourth Sunday of Easter, which we celebrate today, is designated as Good Shepherd Sunday. In the Gospel reading today we witness one of the occasions where Jesus is talking with his disciples and teaching them something about himself. "My sheep," says Jesus, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish. Here the Gospel picks up the belief that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, call each of us by name as we journey through life. Over the last few years, as we emerged from the pandemic, the world has become a much busier place. The pace of life has increased immensely, tensions have increased around the world, uncertainty and the discontent and frustration this breeds are growing all the time. The danger for us is that the voice of the Good Shepherd calling to us is crowded out and we fail to hear him calling us. We are finding it more and more difficult to take time to refresh our sense of vocation as Christians. Perhaps we don't think it important, that there is nothing we can do, that vocation is for the clergy, not for us, but we would be mistaken. For as professing Christians, each of us have a mission, a calling in life. Each one of us is accountable to God for the way we live our lives as his disciples. The Word of God, the word of love, implanted within us at our baptism is waiting to blossom fully within us. It is through each one of us that God will build his kingdom on earth, we each have our part to play. Wherever we go in the world we leave an imprint of ourselves on the ground we tread, we leave in impression of ourselves on the people we meet. As Christians we take Jesus with us wherever we go. It should be our aim to leave an imprint of his presence, an

impression of his love on those who we meet and those with whom we share our lives. Today we are reminded in the Gospel that Christ knows each and every one of us intimately. He calls each of us by name to follow him. Our challenge is to learn to recognise his voice calling out to us amid the renewed hustle and bustle of daily life. For we are those of whom Jesus speaks today when he says, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish. Amen.

Intercessions:

In the power of the Holy Spirit and in union with Christ let us bring our prayers for the Church and for the world to our heavenly Father.

We pray for the Church throughout the world, for the leaders of the Church among them Mary our Bishop. We pray for the clergy and people of our diocese and for our own ministry area; may the Church faithfully proclaim the risen Christ, the sure ground for hope in the world. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the people of the world, for the victims of violence and oppression, for the people of the Ukraine, Yemen, Israel and Gaza, for all suffering the effects of natural disaster and for those suffering from famine or drought; may the power of the risen Christ bring peace where there is conflict and reconciliation where there is division. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own community, for our families, friends and neighbours. We give thanks for all who serve the needs of the vulnerable; may we witness to the risen Christ in our daily lives, bringing your love and peace to all with whom we share our lives.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are in need, for those who are sick, for those who are bereaved, for the lonely and isolated and for all in any kind of need. We hold in our hearts before God those known to us who are in need at this time and all whose names are recorded in our intercession books; relieve them according to their need, strengthen them with your Holy Spirit and console them with the love of Christ.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who have died. We remember before God our own departed loved ones and we pray for the recently departed and those whose anniversary of death falls at this time; welcome them and all the departed into the eternal joy and peace of your heavenly kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We bring all our prayers to our heavenly Father as we pray together:

**Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kingdom,
The power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Peace:

The risen Christ came and stood among his disciples and said, "Peace be with you!" They were overjoyed on seeing the Lord. The peace of the Lord be with you and with all those whom you love.

And also with you.

Let us pray:

Merciful Father, you gave your Son Jesus Christ to be the good shepherd, and in his love for us to lay down his life and rise again: keep us always under his protection, and give us grace to follow in his steps; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Blessing:

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Hymn: Faithful Shepherd, Feed Me

- 1. Faithful Shepherd, feed me
In the pastures green;
Faithful Shepherd, lead me
Where thy steps are seen.**
- 2. Hold me fast and guide me
In the narrow way;
So, with thee beside me,
I shall never stray.**
- 3. Daily bring me nearer
To the heavenly shore;
May my faith grow clearer,
May I love thee more.**
- 4. Hallow every pleasure,
Every gift and pain;
Be thyself my treasure,
Though none else I gain.**
- 5. Day by day prepare me
As thou seest best,
Then let angels bear me
To thy promised rest.**