

The Order of Service for Home Worship

THE FOURTH SUNDAY of EASTER



Hymn: : Thine forever 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.

Father of glory, holy and eternal, look upon us now in power and mercy. May your strength overcome our weakness, your radiance transform our blindness, and your Spirit draw us to that love shown and offered to us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. 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 raise the dead to life in the Spirit. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you bring pardon and peace to the sinner. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you give light to those who live in darkness. **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 book of the Acts of the Apostles.

2. 42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 23 Response: The lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.

The lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall 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 first letter of Peter

2. 19-25

For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Gospel Acclamation:

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! "I came that they may have life," says the Lord, "and have it abundantly."

Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Listen to the Gospel of Christ according to St. John

10. 1-10

Glory to you, O Lord.

'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Meditation: The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd has been used by Christians since the very beginning of the Church, building on the image of the Lord as Shepherd in the 23rd psalm. It is an image that people living in agricultural communities could easily understand, perhaps not an image which resonates so well with us today. Nevertheless, this image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is still a powerful image for Christians 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. All the prophets and Jesus himself, used the shepherd as an image of a responsible leader, devoted to their people, caring for their neighbour. All the prophets spoke of the Lord God as the true shepherd who loves his people. In the Gospel Jesus tells us "the one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep." He is talking about himself. He is the one who, by his death and resurrection, has entered triumphantly through the gates of heaven. More wonderfully for us, he has opened the gates of heaven to us and invites us to follow him into his eternal kingdom. And Jesus goes further, telling his disciples that not only has he, the shepherd of the sheep entered through the gate, He is the gate. "I am the gate for the sheep", he tells them. "Whoever enters by me will be saved." How then, do we enter through the gate which Jesus has opened for us? First of all by listening to his voice, by listening to his voice speaking to us through the words of scripture, by taking his

words to heart and by allowing his words to take root within us, shaping us and moulding our characters into his likeness. And secondly by walking in his footsteps, by loving and caring for all around us, as he loves and cares for us. For Jesus has placed his trust in us to carry on his good work. Christ is dependent on us to be shepherds of his flock in caring and loving service of others. Whenever we reach out to someone in need, we reach out to Jesus, whenever we perform even the smallest act of kindness, we show his love and kindness to others, shepherd his people in love bringing them to Christ, to the gate of everlasting life. There is no other way that we, the Church, can shine as a beacon of peace and love bringing hope to the darkest places of the world and the human heart, a sign of salvation for all in need. 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 all suffering the effects of natural disaster and for those suffering from famine or drought; we pray especially for the people of Ukraine, the Sudan, Gaza, Israel and Lebanon and for all the people of the Middle East and the Gulf. May the glory of Jesus enlighten the nations in the ways of justice and peace.

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.