

# Rathfarnham Lectio Divina Group

All welcome Thursdays at 7.30 in the Parish Centre

*Reflect, meditate and pray, on each Sunday's Gospel*



## Fourth Sunday of Easter 11th May 2025

*John 10:22* At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; <sup>26</sup> but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.

<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> The Father and I are one."

The Good Shepherd passages tell us about Jesus, but also about all who have been given authority over others – parents, teachers, community leaders or spiritual guides. As we meditate on these passages, we therefore think with gratitude of good shepherd we have known. Your meditation could also be an examination of conscience on how you exercise authority.

### **Text Comments**

The passage develops three themes:

- in verse 27 the sheep obey not because of any external compulsion, but because they experience that they belong to the shepherd and are known by him;
- in verse 28 the shepherd is perfectly secure in the loyalty of the sheep. Good shepherds don't have to wonder, "Am I loved?" or "Are the sheep loyal to me?" they can therefore set about the work of leadership in freedom. Secure in their role, they can be creative, try new things, pose new challenges.
- In verses 29 and 30 we see that the security of good shepherds is rooted in their union with God.

It is traditional on this Sunday to remember ministers in the Church, so you might orient your meditation specially in that direction. Make sure you include in your meditation the whole range of "ministers" in a modern church community – parish council members, lectors, ministers of the Eucharist, spiritual guides, choir leaders, finance committee members, directors of organizations such as St Vincent de Paul, prayer groups, etc.

### **Prayer Reflection**

Lord, there are people in our country who are always talked down to because they are considered uneducated or unintelligent.

We pray that at least in our Church communities they may know that they belong, that leaders know them and accept them for who they are.

**MICHEL DE VERTEUIL**– *Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels*

### **OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND**

Across the Ancient Near East, rulers were regularly called shepherds, on account of the pivotal role of the pastor in the care of the sheep. It was the shepherd's responsibility to protect, guide and feed, as it was that of a monarch. It is no surprise that likewise people called their "god" a shepherd, well before and outside of the biblical use of the metaphor. That said, the biblical tradition makes very rich use of this imagery.

### **NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND**

The Fourth Gospel often builds its distinctive reflections on foundations taken from the other three gospels tradition. This is the case here.: e.g,

- (i) As he went ashore, Jesus saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. (Mark 6:34)
- (ii) 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" (Matt 2:6)

**KIERAN O'MAHONY**–[tarsus.ie](http://tarsus.ie)

There is a beautiful line in this passage which reads, 'My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me'. Jesus knows each of us. He knows our deepest desires and our worries, fears insecurities and pain.

This should not disturb us; no, it should give us joy. Bring to mind your deepest friendships. What are the characteristics of such bonds? Usually to know others really well, we must spend time with them, talking and sharing, listening to them. We become aware of their hopes and dreams, we find we are comfortable in their presence. These people are treasures in our lives, beloved soul friends, and we would do anything for them. Jesus too knows us intimately, and we are invited to listen out for his voice and to know that we belong to him. This is a voice which brings peace, not discomfort or shame. This is a voice which says to us: I want you to experience the fullness of life!

*How can you come to know the voice of Jesus more deeply? One way is to commit yourself to spending some time each day pondering his Word, using the practice of **Lectio Divina**.*

**TRÍONA DOHERTY & JAME MELLETT—Go Deeper**

#### **POINTERS FOR PRAYER**

1. Jesus tells us that we can rely on his relationship with us. Think of the relationships you have in which you feel safe and secure because there is mutual understanding and the relationship has stood the test of time.
2. Jesus says that the disciple is one who listens. What is your experience of listening to the word of God in the Scriptures? To what other voices have you listened and found guidance?
3. The faithful disciple is also one who follows the path of love that Jesus preached and practiced. Although it may be difficult at times, it is in following it we find life. Where have you had the experience of listening, responding, loving, and finding life?

**JOHN BYRNE—Intercom**

The Good Shepherd language is to be understood in the light of the Old Testament ideas that God was the shepherd of Israel and that their kings were meant to follow his example. Often they failed in this duty and the people were abandoned. This explains the importance of Jesus describing himself as the shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

In the text for today the emphasis is on the relationship that must exist between Jesus and the members of his flock. They are known to Jesus (this is the intimate knowledge of friendship) and they listen to him and follow him on the path that leads to life. All of this is possible because Jesus is completely united with God his Father.

**SEAN GOAN—Let The Reader Understand, Year C**

(Fr John recently deceased please remember him in your prayers)

Jesus makes bold to explain to them [the Jews] what it means to be his sheep. He emphasises only two characteristics he considers the most essential and indispensable:

*"My sheep hear my voice ....  
and they follow me"*

After twenty centuries we Christians need to remember once again that what is essential to be the church of Jesus is to listen to his voice and to follow in his footsteps.

In the first place we must create the ability to listen to Jesus, to develop far more deeply in our communities that sensitivity which is alive in so many simple Christians who know how to grasp the Word that comes from Jesus in all its freshness and consonance with the Good News of God. John XXIII said on one occasion that *"the church is like an old village fountain and from its tap cool, fresh water must always flow."* In this twenty-centuries-old church we must see that the cool fresh water of Jesus keeps flowing.....

It is not enough to listen to his voice. We must follow Jesus. The adventure is to believe what he believed, to give importance to what he gave importance to, to defend the dignity of the human person as he defended it; to be with the powerless and the vulnerable as he was; to be free to do good as he did; to trust the Father as he trusted him, and to face life and death with the hope with which he faced both.

If those who are lost, lonely or without bearings can find in the Christian community a space where they can learn to live together a life of dignity, solidarity and freedom following Jesus, the church will be offering society one of its best services.

**JOSÉ A PAGOLA—Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C**