

## Homily for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 2020 – The Good Shepherd

Remember that old adage. When the going gets tough – the tough get going. Well, the phrase that keeps popping up at the moment comes from the 80s. ***We are the Easter people and Alleluia is our song!*** *We are the Easter people and alleluia is our song!*

We ought to shout this out a few times today, especially in the tough times we are facing. If sheep could talk, they could well have been bleating this phrase or something similar as they walked along with Jesus because that is what Jesus would have inspired them to do.

Did you know that in 2004, Shrek, a Merino sheep, hid in a cave for six years to avoid being sheared. By the time he was cornered and given his long-overdue haircut there was enough wool to make 20 men's suits. In 2015, a sheep named Chris in Canberra, unloaded 89 lbs of fleece. This is because their fleece never stops growing. 1lb of Sheep's wool can make up to 10 miles of yarn. In taking on the image of a sheep we can compare their fleece to our good works, our acts of love and caring, our sacrifices – and know that they will just keep on growing. However, if not used, they will suffocate us!

**It is always comforting** to be called by name which is both personal and unique. Jesus recognises our uniqueness when he calls out our name lovingly and individually. Seeing Jesus as the Good Shepherd brings to mind the words of Saint Patrick: *Christ before me, Christ behind me; but, most of all, Christ within me.* In recognising and hearing our name and subsequently following the shepherd, we open our ears to him in faith, open our hearts to him in trust, and open our minds to him in love. This is the Way to abundant Life.

**As a gate**, Jesus offers us the prospect of passing through and following the Way. Today we are offered an opportunity, or better a challenge, for the Gate is wide open. Do we have trust and confidence enough to enter? **A STORY:**

*There was once a stone cutter who was dissatisfied with himself and with his position in life. One day while chiselling away on the side of a mountain, he was feeling hot and uncomfortable. He looked up at the sun. It shone proudly in the sky, unaffected by his presence. "How powerful the sun is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be the sun!" And, all of a sudden, his wish was granted, he became the sun, shining fiercely down on everyone, scorching the fields, cursed by the farmers and laborers. But a huge black cloud moved between him and the earth, so that his light could no longer shine on everything below. "How powerful that storm cloud is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a cloud!" And, once again his wish was granted, he became the cloud, flooding the fields and villages, shouted at by everyone. But soon he found that he was being pushed away by some great force, and realized that it was the wind. "How powerful it is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be the wind!" And lo and behold he became the wind, blowing tiles off the rooves of houses, uprooting trees, feared and hated by all below him. But after a while, he ran up against something that would not move, no matter how forcefully he blew against it – a huge, towering rock. "How powerful that rock is!" he thought. "I wish that I could be a rock!" And he became the rock, more powerful than anything else on earth. But as he stood there, he heard the sound of a hammer pounding a chisel into the hard surface, and felt himself being changed. "What could be more powerful than I, the rock?" he thought.*

*And he looked down and saw far below him the figure of a stone cutter!!*

Once we accept ourselves, as and who we are, we will find ourselves at home sitting at the table with Jesus and with our loved ones filled with joy and happiness in their presence – just as we are now!!!

**The Gate:** Malcom Guite

**Not one that's gently hinged or deftly hung,**  
not like the ones you planed at Joseph's place,  
not like the well-oiled openings that swung  
so easily for Pilate's practiced pace.  
Not like the ones that closed in Mary's face  
from house to house in brimming Bethlehem.  
Not like the one that no man may assail,  
the dreadful curtain, the forbidding veil  
that waits your breaking in Jerusalem.

Not one you made but one you have become:  
load-bearing, balancing, a weighted beam  
to bridge the gap, to bring us within reach  
of your high pasture. Calling us by name,  
You lay your body down across the breach,  
Yourself the door that opens into **home**.

**Another story???**

Jim, Scott and Alex are tired after traveling all day and check into a hotel. When they get to reception, they find out they'll have to walk 75 flights of stairs to get to their room because the elevator is out of order. Jim suggests that they do something interesting to pass time while they walk the 75 flights. Jim will tell jokes, Scott will sing songs, and Alex will tell sad stories. So Jim tells jokes for 25 flights, Scott sings songs for 25 flights and Alex tells sad stories for 24 flights. When they reach the 75th floor, Alex tells his saddest story of all, "Guys, I left our room key at reception."