

THE ORATORY—dedicated to THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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Registered as a Charity

Parish Weekly Newsletter

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This newsletter is available in large-print format. Ask at the Sacristy.

April 13th 2008: THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER



What makes a “Good” Shepherd?

People who know the Middle East well often say that you can't really appreciate the full force of Our Lord's parables, that is of His stories and His descriptions of the spiritual life taken from daily life, until you have seen how people actually live in the Holy Land. Today's teaching in the Gospel is a good example. Most of us have little direct experience and knowledge of sheep farming, and even if we did, the chances are that we would find our knowledge did not exactly correspond with what Our Lord says. For instance, a small detail perhaps, but a significant one, is the way in which Our Lord speaks of the shepherd *leading* his flock. Our shepherds usually follow behind the flock to prevent stragglers from getting lost, and rely on their sheepdogs to make sure the front runners of the flock go in the right direction. In order to understand better what Our Lord says about Himself as our shepherd, it is necessary to realise that He leads and we follow Him.

Our Lord also speaks of His sheep following Him “because they know His voice.” He calls them “one by one”, because He knows them all individually, by name. Our Lord says this to reassure us of His love for us all. He knows each one of us intimately. He knows our characters, our strengths and weaknesses, all our deeds. He knows when we go astray, and as He tells us in another part of the Gospel, He is prepared to leave the ninety-nine sheep who are safe, and go off in search for the missing one. You might think that having a hundred sheep, such a shepherd might not notice one missing, or maybe not even care too much. But no—He is prepared to go into the “wilderness”, a perilous place, and expose Himself to difficulties and danger in order to ensure our rescue and safety whenever we have gone astray.

In today's Gospel Our Lord also speaks of “thieves and brigands” who attempt to steal the sheep by misleading them. They try to call the sheep as though impersonating the true shepherd. What does Our Lord intend us to understand from this? He means that there are those who try to mislead God's people, or His “flock”, if you like. Some pose as leaders who wish to set the flock of Christ free from the “restraints” of His teaching, especially when this seems irksome. They seek to make themselves popular by telling people that they are free to do as they please, and not to be “hidebound” by awkward rules. Our Lord teaches us that not only are they false, but that “*they have come only to steal and kill and destroy*”. For instance, those who tell people not to follow the Church's teaching, whether about marriage, or about human life, or about the unity of the Church under Christ's chosen earthly leader, the Pope. Then there are those shepherds who have sinned grievously and scandalously against Christ and His flock by abusing their position of trust. We know, of course that many people are misled in this way. Many have fallen away from their faith in recent years either because of bad teaching, or because of the terrible scandal of various kinds of sexual sin among priests.

I am the Good Shepherd

So how can Our Lord say that the sheep are not fooled? How can we recognise the nuance of the true shepherd's voice and so not be deceived by the impostors? This can only be achieved by recognising that He is “the gate of the sheepfold”. By this phrase He means that only by entering through Him, and going freely in and out under His safe guidance can we avoid being misled. By staying close to the one whom He has appointed as His “Supreme Pastor” on earth we can be sure of safety and of authentic teaching and direction. The Pope is the successor of St. Peter, whom Scripture and Tradition teach us Christ Himself chose to be the “rock on which He built His church” (Mt. 16: 18-19), who also would “strengthen His brethren” after the scandal of Christ's death (Lk. 22:32). It was also Peter whom Our Lord solemnly commanded, after His resurrection, to “feed my lambs and look after my sheep” (Jn. 21:15-20).

On this Sunday in Eastertide we pray for our Pastors, that they may indeed be “good shepherds” after the model of Christ Himself, and we contribute to the expense of forming those who will, we pray, be the good shepherds of the next generation of the Church's life, to guide us in His name through the difficulties and dangers of this life towards eternal life.

Sunday April 13th: the Fourth Sunday of Easter (White)

Year 1 or A of the Lectionary at Mass

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| • 8.30 a.m. <i>Low Mass</i> | • 12.00 p.m. (<i>Families with young children</i>) |
| • 9.30 a.m. <i>1962 rite Mass (in the church)</i> | • 5.30 p.m. <i>Sung Congregational Mass</i> |
| • 10.30 a.m. <i>High Mass</i> | • 7.30 p.m. <i>Vespers and Benediction</i> |

FOURTH WEEK OF EASTER: Liturgical Calendar

Monday to Friday: Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m.

Rosary at 7.45 p.m.

Confessions are heard from 12.30 p.m. and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass.

Monday April 14th: Monday of Easter Week 4. (White)

- **Blessing with St Philip's relic at 8 p.m.**

Tuesday April 15th: Tuesday of Easter Week 4. (White)

- **Benediction at 8 p.m.**
- **Brothers of the Little Oratory meet after Benediction**

Wednesday April 16th: Wednesday of Easter Week 4. (White)

Thursday April 17th: Thursday of Easter Week 4. (White)

Friday April 18th: Friday of Easter Week 4. (White)

Saturday April 19th: Saturday of Easter Week 4. (White)

- **Mass at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.**
- **Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.**
- **Benediction at 10.45 a.m.**
- **Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass**

First Mass of Sunday: The Fifth Sunday of Easter at 5.45 p.m.

Sunday April 20th: The Fifth Sunday of Easter (White)

Mass & Service Times:

- **8.30 a.m. Low Mass**
- **9.30 a.m. Latin Low Mass (1962 Missal)**
- **10.30 a.m. Solemn High Mass**
- **12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)**
- **5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass in English**
- **7.30 p.m. Vespers and Benediction**
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Please pray for the sick: Ken White, Desmond Williams, Lorna O'Shea, Danuta Slyzyk, Vivian Beesley, Marie-Thérèse Jones, Andrew James, Dorothy Price, Ellen Westwood, Grace Naguru, and Margaret Casey. **Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently:** Fr Giuseppe Ferrari of the Roman Oratory, Teresa Lee, Jerzy Bock-Drozdowicz, Muriel Williams, John Carty and Gerry Hanley; **and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now:** Margaret Brennan, Ann Rush-ton, Eugenio Cozzi, Bill Thatcher, James O'Connor, Bernard and Hilda Wood and Mary Kenny.

The following are requested to read next weekend,

April 19th/20th: Fifth Sunday of Easter

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Tracy Butler

Sunday 8.30 a.m.: Margaret Hawkins

12.00 p.m.: Eamon Grant

5.30 p.m.: Simon Stacey

READERS ARE REQUIRED for Saturday & Sunday evening Masses and also for the 8.30 a.m. Mass on Sunday. Please post your name & contact details, in writing, to the Oratory House, or send an e-mail to parish@theoratory.org.uk

Collections

Third Sunday of Eastertide, 6th April:

Offerory: £1,271

Second: Oratory Priests' Training Fund: £649

Many thanks



During Paschaltide, instead of the Angelus, we pray Our Lady's Easter Antiphon:

REGINA CAELI

**Regina Caeli, laetare, Alleluia!
Quia quem meruisti portare, Alleluia!
Resurrexit sicut dixit, Alleluia!
Ora pro nobis Deum, Alleluia!**

Then:

**Rejoice and be glad O Virgin Mary, Alleluia
For the Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!**

**Joy to you, O Queen of Heaven, Alleluia!
He whom you were fit to bear, Alleluia!
As He promised has arisen, Alleluia!
Pour for us to God your prayer, Alleluia!**

Let us pray: O God, who have graciously given joy to the world in the resurrection of your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ; grant, we pray, that through His mother the Virgin Mary, we may attain to the joys of everlasting life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TODAY

THE SECOND COLLECTION this weekend is for the Diocesan Priests' Training Fund.

PATRICIANS' DISCUSSION GROUP meets at 3.15 p.m. in the Oratory House. The subject for discussion will be: "Where and why have all the marriages gone?"

The PIETY STALL is open in the Lower Cloister Hall with a large selection of books, including for children, gifts for occasions of baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, rosaries, DVDs, CDs, statues etc., and Catholic newspapers.

THIS WEEK

The ALTAR SOCIETY meets this Tuesday at 2.30 p.m. in the Oratory House

ADORATION AT REDNAL will take place this week on Wednesday commencing with Mass at 2.30 p.m. Weather permitting, there will be a Blessed Sacrament Procession around the grounds.

The WALSINGHAM ASSOCIATION National Mass is on Saturday at 12 noon in St Chad's Cathedral. All are welcome.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SPUC PRO-LIFE CHAIN: Saturday 26th April from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Hagley Road near the Oratory. You are invited to join this peaceful

and silent kerbside vigil, where the pro-life message is witnessed by thousands of passing motorists. The Abortion Act was passed in 1967, and this year marks the 40th anniversary of its coming into force. More than 6,750,000 unborn children have been killed since. Please join the chain, if only for a while. For more details, contact Gill Bowen: 0121 454 8517.

ALTAR SERVERS: Any men or boys willing to serve Mass especially on Sundays at 8.30 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. (but also at certain other times) are invited to speak either to Fr. Paul or to Fr. Guy.

NOTICES

AN APPEAL TO YOU ALL: GIFT AID: 1. To those of you who already donate to us by this method, we are very grateful indeed since the tax we can reclaim is of great help. **However, from April 6th, the start of the new tax year, our income from this source will be reduced by 11% due to changes in tax rates. Therefore, if you are able to increase your current donations, it would be very much appreciated.** **2.** To those of you who are tax payers (at the basic or higher rate) and who do not yet donate your amount to the collections by this method, may we appeal to you to do so? It costs you no more (and in the case of higher rate tax payers, there is a benefit to you too). **Gift Aid forms are to be found at the back door of the church.**