

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 22)

**ANTIPHON:** The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

**(Or)** Alleluia.

**RESPONSE: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want**

**LECTOR:** The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose. Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit. **R.**

**LECTOR:** He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name. If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear. You are there with your crook and your staff; with these you give me comfort. **R.**

**LECTOR:** You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. **R.**

**LECTOR:** Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) The Good Shepherd has risen, who laid down his life for his sheep and willingly died for his flock, alleluia.

**TODAY'S READINGS** Acts 2:14, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20-25; John 10:1-10

**NEXT WEEK** (5th Sunday of Easter, Year A) Acts 6:1-7; Ps 32; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12

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guiding the  
flock



26 April 2026 4th Sunday Easter Year A

One of the most memorable moments in the Australian film Babe comes when the sheep explain that all border collies and kelpies are wolves. The dogs chase, nip, and intimidate. They move sheep by pressure and fear. Babe, however, learns another way. He listens. He speaks gently. And, astonishingly, the sheep follow him because they recognise that he means them no harm.

In this week's gospel, Jesus insists that "the sheep hear his voice" and follow him because they know it (John 10:3-4). This image does not sit comfortably with Australian experience. On a real property, sheep do not respond to the grazer's voice at all. The spoken commands are for the dog. "Come by!" "Away!" "Lie down!" The sheep move as the dogs circle them, cutting off any avenues of escape, applying constant force, until the mob are moved through the gate. It works; but it is leadership by proxy.

In John 10 there is no border collie, no intermediary barking commands or nipping heels on the shepherd's behalf. The relationship is direct. The sheep follow not because they are herded, but because they recognise who is calling them; and just as importantly, who is not. Strangers, thieves, and brigands do not get a hearing. The sheep run from those voices.

This distinction helps make sense of the other readings. In Acts, Peter's Pentecost sermon does not press its audience. Those listening are "cut to the heart" and ask, freely, "What must we do?" (Acts 2:37). Their response – repentance, baptism, and entry into the community – flows from recognition

rather than force. Likewise, the letter of 1 Peter describes people who had "gone astray like sheep" but have now returned to "the shepherd and guardian" of their souls (1 Pet 2:25). They are not driven back into line. They come back because they have learned where safety and life are found.

There is something quietly confronting here for contemporary Australians. We are rightly suspicious of authority exercised through fear, pressure, or manipulation. The gospel affirms that instinct. Jesus does not ask for blind obedience. Jesus calls for discernment and reason. Not every voice deserves our trust. Some voices do steal, kill, and destroy. Others promise freedom but operate like wolves in disguise.

Jesus, the good shepherd, does not "dog" our heels. He goes ahead of the flock rather than pushing from behind. He opens the gate rather than cornering the sheep. He leads the flock toward open pastures, not enclosed pens. And he promises not just survival, but life "to the full." Perhaps the humour lies in recognising ourselves in Babe's sheep. We are not stupid, but we are vulnerable. We know pressure when we feel it, and we know when fear is being used to move us along.

Easter's good news is that the risen Christ does not manage us like livestock. He calls us by name, invites trust, and teaches us to recognise His voice among all the others clamouring for attention.