

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 30, 2023



God Who Promised to Be a Shepherd

For thus says the Lord God: Look! I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out.
As a shepherd seeks out his flock while he himself is among his scattered sheep,
so will I seek out my sheep. I will deliver them from every place where
they were scattered on the day of dark clouds.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holiday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, April 29 *Vigil of the 4th Sunday of Easter*

4:00pm For a special intention asking for spiritual protection

Sunday, April 30 *Fourth Sunday of Easter - World Day of Prayer for Vocations*

7:30am For a special intention asking for spiritual protection

4:00pm Asking God to keep a job secure

Monday, May 1 *Saint Joseph the Worker*²

12:00nn Seeking God's help in financial matters

Tuesday, May 2 *Saint Athanasius, bishop & doctor*¹

12:00nn Asking God's blessing upon upcoming nuptials

Wednesday, May 3 *Feast of Ss. Philip & James, apostles*

12:00nn Healing for Patrick James Walsh

Thursday, May 4 *National Day of Prayer*

4:00nn +Edwin "Ed" Lopes by his friends

Friday, May 5 *First Friday - Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

12:00nn +Raymond & Jacqueline Gemme

Saturday, May 6 *Vigil of the 5th Sunday of Easter*

4:00pm For Jen, a beloved niece

Sunday, May 7 *Fifth Sunday of Easter*

7:30am Names enrolled in OLP Purgatorial Society—All Souls Day 2022

4:00pm Healing for Kay Cahalane

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday* is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding the Gospels of Eastertide

In the Gospels, many of the sayings of Jesus, at first, might seem puzzling, yet many of those same statements become clearer in light of the Resurrection because of what scholars identify as *paschal faith*. When placed in that context, those seemingly enigmatic sayings become revelation regarding who Jesus is and the nature of His mission. This week's Gospel is the beginning of a longer discourse (Jn 10:1-42) concerning the image of the Good Shepherd. The literary genre of Chapter 10 is usually thought of as a parable, which through the characters and situations depicted in it becomes either an illustration or a point of departure for a teaching. However, this chapter of the Fourth Gospel is not perfectly suited to being understood as a parable. It is equally not an allegory which is a written account by which each of its elements is intended to symbolize something else. Those two literary genres are not mutually exclusive because there can be allegorical elements in a parable, too. Chapter 10, then, can best be characterized as an *enigma* whose meaning must be discovered. In verse 6, the evangelist described it as a figure of speech (Gk. *παροιμία*). Following the cure of the man born blind, these seemingly enigmatic sayings were addressed to the Pharisees who questioned whether or not Jesus was the Messiah (Jn 9:29). Hearing this passage in the contemporary setting, it confronts those who question the necessity of Christ's role as Mediator and others who consider Him to be only one possible messiah among others or who question the unique nature of His mission. Thus, this passage seeks to undergird belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Jesus is portrayed as the only legitimate shepherd, who enters the sheep pen through the gate. The gatekeeper eagerly opens the gate and once the sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, they willingly follow behind Him as the sheep are led out. The voice of a stranger is an unfamiliar voice that the sheep will not recognize because instead of following a stranger's voice, the sheep run away. The fundamental reason for entering the sheepfold is in order to lead the sheep out; however, putting all logic aside, there is an even a more subtle allusion to another going out or exodus when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. Almost ironically, when the Pharisees confronted the man who had been blind from birth, though now he could see, they said, "...we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from" (Jn 9:28-29). These enigmatic sayings are deliberate and, thus, by being deliberately ambiguous, they can engender doubt. In order to avoid confusion, Jesus clearly states, "I am the gate" for the sheep. Unlike today, in the first century, the average shepherd cared for twenty to eighty sheep. He walked with the

Saint Catherine of Siena - The Dialogue

It is as if this gentle loving Word, my Son, were saying to you: "Look, I have made the road and opened the gate for you with my blood. Do not fail, then, to follow it. Do not sit down to rest out of selfish concern for yourself, foolishly saying you do not know the way. Do not presume to choose your own way of serving instead of the one I have made for you in my own person, eternal Truth, incarnate Word, the straight way hammered out with my own blood." Get up, then, and follow him, for no one can come to me the Father except through him. He is the way and the gate through whom you must enter into me, the sea of peace.

sheep, spending all day and night with them. He named his sheep, and those sheep knew his voice. He was entrusted to care for the sheep, protect them, to lead, bring them to water, and feed them. John 10 contains two of the seven "I am (Gk. ἐγώ εἰμι) statements of Jesus, these two *ego eimi* declarations describe Jesus as the gate and the Good Shepherd. To the modern ear, the two images seem to clash – the shepherd becomes the gate. In fact, not only is Jesus the shepherd sent from God or the new Moses to lead the sheep because, as He is declared to be greater than Moses, Jesus is also the gate. In linking both terms, He is the only sure way out of the sheepfold and anyone else who makes such a claim, whether before the Good Shepherd comes or after His coming, is a thief and marauder. This false shepherd seeks "only to steal and slaughter and destroy..." While Jesus is stridently condemning false prophets, in light of the fact that He "came so that [His sheep] might have life and have it more abundantly," such condemnation does not stand alone. Instead, it includes this universal promise: "Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture." Even false prophets are included in Christ's call to conversion and, so if even the lost realize that Jesus is the gate or the way to salvation, even those who stray can be saved. Those who remain under the Lord's crook and staff—the sheep who know and heed His voice—because they are the ones who follow Him, they know that they are indebted for their safety to the unending love that the Shepherd has for them. Their ability to freely come and go is the Shepherd's gift because He must leave those who know Him and seek out the lost sheep. While away, the sheep are restless until His return and, when that happens, those already-saved rejoice that the Good Shepherd is back and the lost sheep whom He carries on His back are welcomed into the fold. Now, having been raised from the dead, Christ has passed through the gate of death and entered into glory. Having been made both "Lord and Christ," by declaring that Jesus is risen and alive forevermore, that declaration constitutes an act of faith that the Risen Lord is the true and only Guide. By following in His footsteps, those who do will "have life and have it more abundantly." Surely and squarely at the head, as both Shepherd and Lord, Christ leads the flock that has been ransomed by His death and brought together in the acknowledgement of His resurrection as He beckons us to remain on the road of our paschal exodus. The Shepherd who suffered for His sheep, however, has a face marred by scars, but beaming forth with the heavenly light which illuminates difficult paths. Sin distorts the light, yet amid conflicting temptations, the voice of the Shepherd is heard over all others, leading those who recognize His voice along the right path and toward the ultimate destination.

The Fiftieth Day & Jubilee 2025 - Pilgrims of Hope

The biblical significance of the number fifty is derived from the first Pentecost, which coincided with the Jewish feast of Shavuot determined by this mathematical formula: $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$. The Israelites celebrated the Jubilee Year during the fiftieth year following every "seven sabbaths of years" or forty-nine years (Lev 25:8-55; 27:16-25; Num 36:4). During such a year, any ancestral land that Israelites families had sold was given back to them. Also, anyone who, plagued by poverty, had sold himself (or been sold) into slavery to a fellow Israelite regained his liberty. Not only the people, but the land itself was "freed" from being worked. No planting or sowing, harvesting or reaping took place during the fiftieth year. Like the sabbatical year (every seventh year), the Jubilee Year was a great sabbath or rest for the people of God and the land that belonged to Him. Therefore, because of the Jubilee Year, the number fifty is closely associated with the remission of debts, emancipation of slaves, and rest within God's protective care. Like the festival held every fifty years, so Shavuot, the festival held every year on the fiftieth day, proclaimed the following: (1) God had freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; (2) he had fulfilled his promise to give them the Holy Land; (3) he provided rest for them from their labors. In the Catholic Church, the first-ever Jubilaum or Holy Year was instituted by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300 and was initially celebrated every 100 years. Then, following earlier biblical tradition, Holy Years were observed every 50 years, and it was finally decided by Pope Paul II in 1490 to observe the Jubilee Year every 25 years, so that each person could experience one in his or her lifetime. The upcoming Holy Year of 2025 will be the 27th ordinary jubilee year of the Catholic Church. Its motto is *Pilgrims of Hope*. A new custom of calling "extraordinary" jubilees, meaning outside of the 25-year rotation, and which can last a few days to a few months, began in the 16th century. There have only been a handful of extraordinary jubilees since, the latest being the 2015-2016 Jubilee of Mercy called by Pope Francis. As preparation for the Holy Year, this current year is meant to encourage a re-reading of the four Constitutions issued by the Second Vatican Council (Sacrosanctum Concilium, Lumen Gentium, Dei Verbum, and Gaudium et Spes). Then, in 2024 — the year prior to the Jubilee Year, the emphasis is entrusted to a focus on prayer.

FIFTY DAYS FROM EASTER TO PENTECOST

Introduction

Today's gospel which is taken from the tenth chapter of Saint John is a portion of the Lord's teaching in Jerusalem which occurred during the Feast of Dedication, which is revealed in verse 22 of that chapter (Jn 10:22). This feast is the same as what is known today as Hanukkah or the Feast of Lights. It is a Jewish feast which was not mandated in the Law of Moses. Three of the feasts in the Mosaic Law – Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles – were feasts requiring all males in Israel to journey to the presence of God, which after King David brought the Ark of the Covenant there was designated as Jerusalem. There, in the Temple which housed the ark, they were to celebrate those feasts. The Festival of Lights or Hannukkah was a feast inaugurated much later than during the time of Moses. King Antiochus IV Epiphanus had attacked Jerusalem, slaughtered an untold number of its inhabitants and defiled the Temple by sacrificing a pig on the bronze altar. He then made a broth from the burned pig and sprinkled the pig juice all over the Temple precincts in order to thoroughly defile it. The Maccabees later cleansed and restored the Temple and rededicated it to the worship of God, and the Feast of Dedication acknowledged this event.

Easter to Pentecost - $7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$

In the seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost, the Church's Liturgy of the Word incorporates two types of biblical readings. First, most of the Eastertide gospels focus upon the post-resurrection appearances wherein the disciples saw the Risen Christ as somewhat recognizable as He had formerly manifested Himself before dying and rising but, yet, after rising from the dead, Christ was also decidedly different. Regardless of their nature, these appearances portray beautiful moments of joy, trepidation, surprise and hope. As post-resurrection appearances, these encounters with the Lord as risen and glorified constitute the events between the time of His coming out of the tomb on the first Easter morning and his Ascension into Heaven ten days before the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and the Virgin Mary on the Feast of Pentecost. Pentecoste (Gk. *πεντηκοστή*) or the fiftieth day celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, the birth of the Church and the spiritual gifts that God graciously bestows on us to transform our lives. Then, as is true in this Sunday's Gospel, the lectionary provides us with teachings that the Lord had engaged in before His crucifixion, but it is a teaching that must be considered in light of His Resurrection and Ascension. In this week's pericope Jesus gives two comparisons by comparing Himself to the Shepherd and to the Gate. The first title represents His ownership and He calls each sheep by name. They recognized His voice and stayed close to Him. The second title represents His leadership. Jesus

is the Gate, the door through which the sheep have access to the shepherd. The central image, too, is not so much that of the shepherd but it is the image of the gate. In fact, later on in the passage, Jesus says that He is the Gate of the sheepfold, while the shepherds who come in and out are the shepherds who are faithful to Him. Anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate, such as by climbing over the fence or breaking through the gate is dangerous and should be avoided. Only a thief and a brigand who comes to steal and do harm to the sheep will not use the gate. The genuine shepherd, however, enters by the Gate and is recognized and admitted by the watchman outside. In most Western cultures, shepherding often involves a conflicted relationship with the sheep. Shepherds often drive sheep in different directions using sheep dogs to intimidate them to do so. However, in first-century cultures of the Middle East, shepherds did not drive the sheep; instead, they led them. Dogs were not used either. The shepherd walked in front, and the sheep followed him, having learned to respond to his voice signals. Among those sheep-herders, it was said that two shepherds could mix their flocks in the same pen overnight, and in the morning, one shepherd was able to extricate his entire flock from that mixed group simply by making his distinctive call. It is a reminder of the Lord's words in the Gospel, "My sheep know my voice." Thus, shepherding in the ancient Near East was a much more personal affair than in modern Western cultures.

The Twenty-third Psalm

The greatest testimony to the role of a good shepherd is Psalm 23. Once a great actor gave a wonderful performance in a large theater, at the close of which there were rounds of applause. He was called back again and they asked: "Would you do for us the Twenty-third Psalm?" He agreed and recited it as an actor would, perfectly, with nothing left to be desired as far as a performance was concerned. When he was finished, again there was thunderous applause. Then the actor came to the front of the stage and said that the elderly pastor sitting in the front row would repeat the Twenty-third Psalm, the Lord is my Shepherd. The elderly gentleman, of course, was frightened. Trembling, he came to the stage and fearfully looked out over the vast audience. Then, as though he were at home only with the Lord, he closed his eyes blocking out the image of the audience, bowed his head, and talked to God, and said: "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want...." When the old man finished, there was no applause, but there was not a dry eye in that theater. The actor came to the front of the stage. He, too, was wiping his eyes and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, it was beautiful. You see, I know the words of the Twenty-third Psalm, but this man knows the Shepherd."