

Church of the Divine Love
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
APRIL 30, 2023 10:15 A.M.
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn -#

Opening Acclamation for Easter page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Acts 2:42-47**

Psalm 23

Second Lesson: **1 Peter 2:19-25**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **John 10:1-10**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 367

Hymn during Consecration – on insert

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn #

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn #

Dismissal

Sermon Sunday April 30, 2023

Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10

Beloved Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Does my life matter? Do I make a difference, and if so, how? I suspect we all struggle with these questions or questions like them. I'm pretty sure that at some level they are always with us. And we don't just want someone else to say yes. We want to be able to say yes for ourselves.

I think that is part of the reason for our busyness. We are trying to show that our life does matter and that we make a difference. It's often the unstated, maybe even the unknown reason, why, especially when we are young and developing our careers, we work so hard. We've got to prove ourselves, we've got to acquire, we've got to achieve, because we want to make sure that people know, and more importantly, that we know, that our life matters and makes a difference. And we've probably all had times when we look back on our life, maybe when the kids move out or when we retire, and we ask ourselves what we've done and whether we've made a difference in this world.

I don't know how many times I've been to the nursing home and I've heard someone say, "I'm just ready to go. I don't want to be here; I don't understand what God is doing. Why am I still here?" I can't help but wonder if what they are really asking is whether their life matters and what difference does it make to another. Are they of value? Regardless of when or how those questions come up I think they are grounded in a deep longing and desire for abundance in our life. We want to be an abundant people. We want to live an abundant life. And so, I want to look at those words of Jesus in relationship to

abundance. Where do you experience abundance in your life and what does that look like? What does abundance mean for you? What does it feel like when you live apart or distant from abundance? And I'm not talking about abundance in terms of quantity. It is not a quantity. Abundance is a quality of life. It's a way of being.

We can all tell stories of times in our life when there was something we wanted and we worked really hard or we waited a long time and we finally got that thing we wanted and once we had it, it didn't do what we thought it would. It didn't fill us up. It didn't fulfill. It didn't satisfy. We got what we wanted but we had no abundance. Abundance is that quality of life that lets us touch the deepest part of ourselves. It connects us with the divine, with the holy, and with what's good, true, and beautiful in this world. It's not so much about getting something we don't have, but living more fully into what is already present. So that abundance is love that leads to love. It's joy that leads to joy. It's peace that leads to peace. It's kindness that leads to kindness. It's stepping more deeply and more fully into our own life and into the life of another. It never adds to the pain of the world. Abundance is Jesus' way of being in this world. It is the presence of God lived through your life and my life.

Psalms 23 and today's gospel (John 10:1-10), with its images of shepherd, gatekeeper, gate, sheep, thieves and bandits, are exactly what we need to hear today. These two readings are full of metaphors and each one has something to do with life, and life abundant. The metaphor of the gate, however, is what gets my attention today. Jesus says that he is the gate. Gates open and close. Gates keep sheep in, and thieves and bandits out. Gates close to death and open to life. Jesus is the gate that encloses and protects what is of value. And he is the gate that opens to pastures of abundance, still waters of abundance, tables of abundance, cups of abundance. "I came," he says, "that they may have life, and have it abundantly." The gate and shepherd work in concert to protect and guide the flock so that it might flourish. Those words from Psalm 23 are clear that even in the valley of the shadow of death, God is good, comforting, and present with us. The role of the sheep is to trust in God and trust that God will bring abundant life. But that abundant life does not always look the way we might imagine it.

What does that mean for you today? Where is your life abundant? And in what ways is it less than abundant? Keep in mind, however, that abundance is not something we get or possess. It's a way of living and being. It's a way of relating to others and engaging the world. The abundant life is not about quantity, wealth, success, approval, popularity, security, being number one, or any of the other things we often think it is. How many times have you gotten what you wanted, been what others said you should be, or done what was encouraged and rewarded by society only to discover your own emptiness and poverty? You may have had it all but you were not abundant. The abundant life is a quality of life, not a quantity of stuff. It's about faith, hope, and love. It's about goodness and mercy. It's more about compounding value than it is about compounding interest.

The abundant life adds to, compounds, and enhances our lives and the lives of others. It refuses to add to the pain of the world. It is life that leads to life, love that leads to love, joy that leads to joy, hope that

leads to hope, courage that leads to courage, kindness that leads to kindness, generosity that leads to generosity, beauty that leads to beauty, forgiveness that leads to forgiveness, dignity that leads to dignity, gratitude that leads to gratitude. It is life and more life. Abundance encompasses the deep qualities and values of your life, the things that matter most and give your life meaning, purpose, and value. It is what opens your heart to others. Where and in what ways is the compounding of life happening for you and where is it absent? What gates do you need to reopen? And what would that take? What gates need to close or remain closed? What if, as you and I face the question of reopening, we were to listen to and follow the shepherd within you? What would that look like and mean in your life today? What if each one of us decided to let the shepherd's voice guide our reopening? I think it might change us, our relationships, our community and world.

That shepherd, that one, who leads, and guides, and calls us each by name; that shepherd who opens and closes gates – that shepherd will not abandon, betray, or mislead us. The Lord is our shepherd and we shall not be in want. Every one of us could tell a story when we were the good shepherd and we guided and we protected and we nourished. And we could tell a story of how, ten minutes later, we were the hired hand and we ran out. We could talk about the sheep that matter and are so valuable. And we could tell stories about the wolves that devour, snatch, and scatter.

It would be easy to divide this gospel into good characters and bad characters. Let's not do that. Let's just hear this story as information about our lives, without making a judgment or a conclusion, but simply as an opening to the abundant life. "I have come," Jesus says, "that they may have life and have it more abundantly." It's his starting point and it's his goal. Abundant life is Jesus' promise to each of us. May we ever follow where God the Good Shepherd leads, learning to recognize where God is calling us, especially when abundant life does not conform to worldly standards of wisdom. **Amen!**

4 EASTER	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
	11:15 AM	VESTRY MEETING	
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	

THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
5 EASTER	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP OFF IN THE KITCHEN

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Anthony Giordano
Coffee Hour	Nolans	Judy Golden

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Lourdes S.	Kaylee
Bob Curley	Arlene Goodenough	Celeste
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.

Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Bethany
Barbara Stinson	Michael & Family	Warren
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Anthony
Mo (Rachael)	Phil Ryser	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Ciara	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Christopher	Amy
Nathan Treadwell	Vincent	Tim
Judy	Art	

All people and countries suffering from violence and hatred.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,

Lay my life before you,

How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions
and glory, now and for ever. Amen