

**‘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.’**

—from Malcolm Guite, ‘I am the door of the sheepfold’



REFLECT

Where is the gate to God? It is not a metal detector or face scanner that we must pass through in order to gain access to God. The gate to the sheepfold is Jesus, the risen Lord. It is through this gate that we can also participate in the divinity of God. This is an encouraging thought: that the sheepfold to which we belong—the church—has such a strong doorkeeper.

Another aspect of our life in God’s sheepfold is our free choice to be here. The famous painting *The Light of the World* by William Holman Hunt shows Jesus with a lantern knocking on a door at night time. The door has no handle on the outside. The story goes that upon completion of the work, someone commented that Hunt had forgotten the handle; to this claim the artist replied that the door can only be opened from the inside. Christ at our door does not force himself on us. God always leaves us free to respond to a divine invitation.

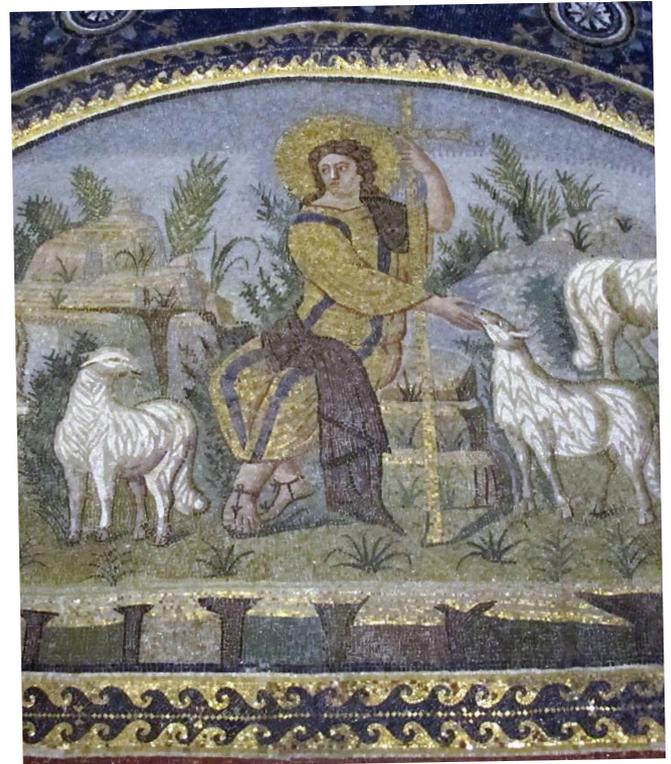
Jesus’ role as gatekeeper to the kingdom of God has several somewhat challenging elements though. He announces to the crowds that entry to God’s sheepfold is given, first, to the broken, the lame, the outcasts and, especially, children. Entrance is not based on wealth, prestige, power or good looks; these values mean little. Indeed, Jesus’ sermons, parables, healings and care for the marginalised were all examples of his gatekeeper code: God raises up the lowly. On the cross, Jesus continued to preach God’s reign, even to a condemned and guilty criminal. The crucified gatekeeper heard the prayer of a thief and promised him that in a very short time, he would inhabit God’s kingdom of peace and paradise. Outcasts are welcomed in Jesus’ fold.

A more unsettling element of this sheepfold vigilance is God’s rejection of certain people: the haughty are rejected; hypocrites don’t get near the door; false witnesses and those who peddle false truths are told there is no room for them in God’s reign. God’s gatekeeper, Jesus, makes no reply to Herod at his trial, his silence powerfully conveying that this evil fox has no place in his sheepfold. We are called as followers of Jesus to share his spirit of strength and power and not to slink into a spirit of timidity (2 Timothy 1:7). We are called to emulate the gatekeeper, strongly denouncing evil when we see it, and bravely declaring that God’s promise stands strong: the humble and meek will inherit the kingdom, and the mighty are cast down from their thrones.

- How can I freely respond to God’s invitation to share a divine life in the sheepfold today?

PRAY

Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd,
Help us to know your voice and respond to your call,
so that we might experience the fullness and freedom
of life in you.
Amen.



Mosaic of the Good Shepherd (c.425),
Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, Italy



THIS WEEK

I will seek to bring new life
and hope to others.

—

I will allow God to surprise me with joy.

—

I will bring my fears and sorrows to Jesus,
trusting them to his tender love.

WEEKLY POCKET PRAYER

**‘If I should walk in the valley of
darkness, no evil would I fear’**

—Psalm 22:4

May the risen Christ bring me peace and
protection in all the dark valleys of my life.



Fifth Sunday of Easter

'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.'



—1 Peter 2:9

BE STILL

- Light a candle as a reminder of Christ's presence.
- Take a moment to allow whatever is in your heart to rise, and offer your thoughts to the loving care of the Lord.

SING OR LISTEN

'Do not let your hearts be troubled' or 'Come, my way, my truth, my life'.

GATHERING PRAYER

Risen Lord Jesus,
Show us the way.
Speak the truth we need to hear.
Draw us into the abundant life you have prepared for us.
Amen.

GOSPEL

A reading from the gospel according to John:

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me. There are many rooms in my Father's house; if there were not, I should have told you. I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too. You know the way to the place where I am going.'

Thomas said, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.'

Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.'

'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him 'and you still do not know me. To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, "Let us see the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing this work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe it on the evidence of this work, if for no other reason.

I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.'

—John 10:1-10

The Gospel of the Lord.

PONDER THE WORD

After the first reading, what words or phrases struck you from this passage?

Re-read the gospel. Take a moment of silence to reflect upon how God is speaking through this text. Noting down some responses to the following may assist with reflection:

I think about my life:

- What is God asking me to listen to?
- What does God want me to pay attention to?
- What is God prompting, directing, leading and guiding me to in this reading?

I think about my community and the world:

- What is God asking of us at this time?
- What is God wanting us to attend to in our community and our world?
- What is God prompting, directing, leading and guiding us towards?



**‘Christ our life ... You set before us a great choice. Therefore we choose life.
The dance of resurrection soars and surges through the whole creation.’**

–Kathy Galloway, ‘Easter Prayer’ (Iona Community)



REFLECT

John’s gospel is a gift to us from a community with the time to live, love and learn what Jesus said and did. Full of beautiful images, it conveys something of the mystery and complexity of Jesus. Last week’s gospel told us that Jesus is the gate and the Good Shepherd. Today, Jesus reveals himself as ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life’.

Our scripture today follows directly on from Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s denial. As soon as this hard truth is spoken, though, Jesus entreats the disciples, and us, to have untroubled hearts—to trust in God and Jesus even when we’re surrounded by anxiety and puzzlement, even when faced with our lack of love; to trust that there is ‘meaning in the madness’.

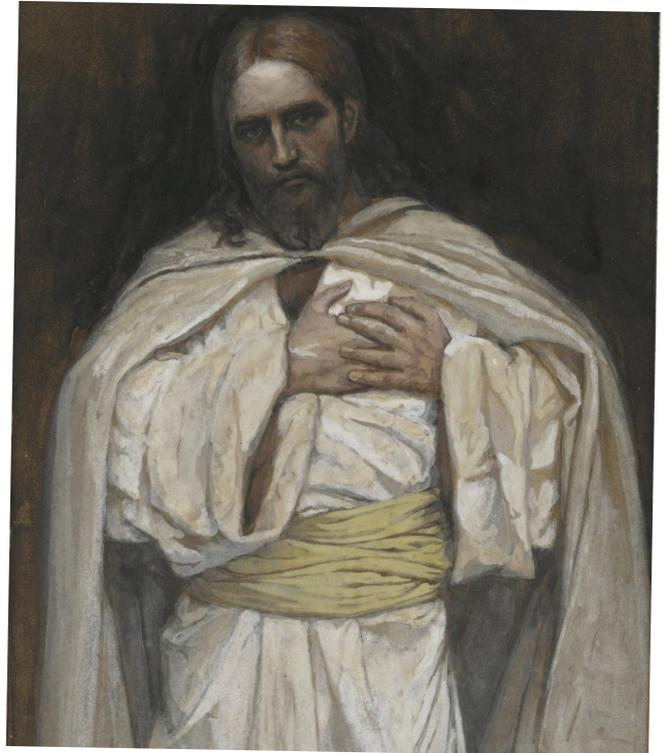
This invitation to trust is backed by a promise that where Jesus is, he has prepared a place for us. And how do we know the way? Because Jesus himself is ‘the way’. He is the one who accompanies us, leads us, calls our name, and we are invited to follow. This startling declaration—‘I am the way’—invites us to look not just externally or ahead in space and time, but also internally. If I believe that Jesus dwells in me, do I allow him to prepare a special place of peace and trust in my mind and heart? Or like my twin, Thomas, have I failed to recognise that Jesus is the way to this place?

Jesus is ‘the truth’, and he challenges the disciples, and us, to believe him—to look and listen to the evidence we have seen and experienced. We are in the privileged position of being able to consider Jesus’ words with hindsight. We look at all this in the light of the resurrection. Does this make our believing easier? Or do we, like Phillip, who struggles to see Jesus’ deeper self and purpose (John 6:5), need to see more to be satisfied and to believe with confidence?

The gift of the Trinity—the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit—is perfect communion. What an incredible truth these followers of the Way were able to uncover: that Jesus was not just sent by the Father, but is of the same substance as the Father; that the Father dwells in him, and that we are invited into this communion. It is mind-blowing! And yet we know that a kind word, a phone call or email at the needed time, patience and generosity in the face of selfishness and hurt, and instances of creativity and beauty are all evidence that our God lives with, in and around us. This abundant, generous kind of living is the life of our God, truly present. ‘I am the Life,’ Jesus says. We can be assured of this reality: that our God wants to be the life in us and that, if we cooperate, amazing things will happen.

PRAY

Jesus Christ,
Help us not to be troubled but to believe, trusting in your amazing promise to us, so that the Father might perform great works through us.
Amen.



Our Lord Jesus Christ by James Tissot



THIS WEEK

I will seek to bring new life
and hope to others.

—

I will allow God to surprise me with joy.

—

I will bring my fears and sorrows to Jesus,
trusting them to his tender love.

WEEKLY POCKET PRAYER

**‘Lord, let your mercy be on us,
as we place our trust in you.’**

—psalm response (Psalm 32:22)

May I entrust myself each day
to the mercy of the risen Christ.



‘God is a “family” of three Persons who love each other so much as to form a single whole ... The trinitarian horizon of communion surrounds all of us and stimulates us to live in love and fraternal sharing, certain that where there is love, there is God.’

—Pope Francis, Angelus address, 22 May 2016



REFLECT

Today’s gospel is tightly packed with mysteries that we could spend our lifetimes unravelling and exploring. The text tells us that following Jesus’ commandments is a sign of a person’s love for Jesus. The synoptic gospels (in Matthew 22:35–40, Mark 12: 28–34 and Luke 10: 27) all include the Hebrew *Shema*, a prayer that Jesus and his disciples, as faithful Jews, would have recited morning and night—‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength’ (Deuteronomy 6:4)—along with Jesus’ addition, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’ (Leviticus 19:18).

In John’s gospel, though, Jesus gives a new commandment: ‘that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another’ (John 13:34–35). The difference between the *Shema* and this new commandment lies in the words ‘as I’. Profoundly, it moves us from reflecting on how we love to reflecting on how *Jesus* loves—with a love so great that it was able to continue through death to new life; so encompassing of the mission that we are brought into the divine communion Jesus himself experiences. This is a love that challenges us to remain in love with Jesus so that we can love *like* him; indeed that he may love *through* us.

In this gospel, we receive a promise that is both comfort and challenge: anybody who receives and keeps these commandments is one who loves Jesus; and anybody who loves Jesus will be loved by the Father, and loved by Jesus, who will show himself to them. They will know and be known by a love that is selfless and generous; a love that frees!

Jesus was the disciples’ comforter, companion and defender, and he reassures us that he will not leave us without a new advocate, one who will come alongside us, continuing to fill us with God’s presence. Through the Father, Jesus, who revealed himself as Truth, imparts the Spirit of truth. Beautiful trinitarian overtones overlay all of this discourse. Father, Son and Spirit act *through, in* and *with*, never on their own. As those called to witness to the living presence of the risen Jesus, we can be reassured: if we love as Jesus loved, acknowledging that our love will always be imperfect, we will be recognised and named as disciples of Jesus. What fruit will this bear? Joy! In our own lives and in the lives of those we encounter.

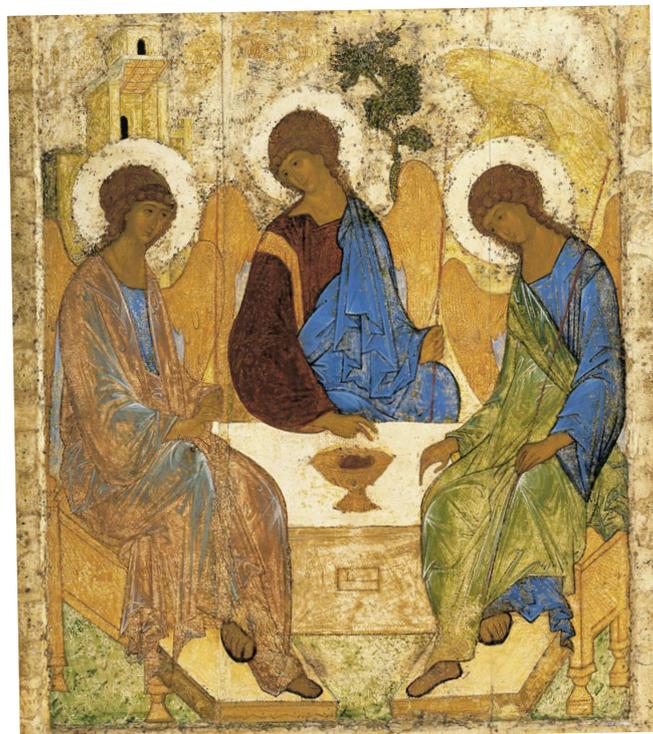
- What characterises you as a disciple of Jesus?
- How do you bring joy?
- Where might you call on the Spirit of truth as you witness to Jesus?

PRAY

Jesus Christ

Help us to keep your commandments, so that we might live in you, and you in us.

Amen.



Trinity by Andrei Rublev



THIS WEEK

I will seek to bring new life
and hope to others.

—

I will allow God to surprise me with joy.

—

I will bring my fears and sorrows to Jesus,
trusting them to his tender love.

WEEKLY POCKET PRAYER

‘May all the earth cry out
to God with joy.’

—psalm response

May God’s love dwell in me
and flow through me,
bringing freedom and joy.

