

## **Ecoutez-moi!**

### **Easter IV Year A 2020**

#### **Benefice**

#### **Readings:**

Acts 2:42-end

John 10:1-10

+ *In Nomine*

One voice that I rather feared as a teenager was that of my French teacher. Though an excellent teacher, “Madame” was a formidable and excitable lady, the epitome of everything French – she was a bit exotic really for a bunch of Aussie schoolgirls! One thing none of us risked when she shouted “Ecoutez-moi” was to continue that surreptitious chat with the girl at the next desk... unless of course you were happy for the wrath of France to descend upon your head.

In recent weeks we have been deluged in the media by so many voices, many conflicting, many strident, so many instilling fear into us all. We listen with horror to the mounting death toll – it looks now like we have one of the highest casualty rates in the world for coronavirus. We listen with disbelief that front line health workers have not all been provided with the protective equipment they need to carry out their work safely. We listen with mounting impatience to platitudes – I don’t know about you but if I hear the phrase “we’re working round the clock...” once more you’ll hear my scream all the way to Southery! We even hear the most outrageous and alarming scaremongering – did you know that 5G towers spread Covid-19???

These voices for the most part offer slim if any hope. There’ll be no vaccine in the foreseeable future. The over 70’s must remain locked down indefinitely. The world and UK economies are in freefall and another Great Depression looms. It’s a confusing cacophony – where do we find wisdom and truth amid the clamour? Sadly, the loudest voices don’t always speak the truth and can entice us away from the Easter message of hope – hope of that abundant life that Jesus offers.

In this morning’s Gospel, Jesus says to us, “Ecoutez-moi”...”Listen to me”. In the midst of all the voices competing for our attention, we are challenged to listen to the one which really matters. Jesus calls us to ‘life’. In midst of all the despair washing about us at present, Jesus calls us to

share in his Risen life – to choose life and have it abundantly. To listen to Him who is the way, the truth and the life. The image of the shepherd in this morning's Gospel is one of positivity and hope. Jesus knows each one of us intimately – he calls us each by name and leads us to that place of shelter and reassurance in Him just as real sheep still follow their shepherds who are responsible for their safety and well being.

This time of lockdown can be a time of opportunity if we allow it. An opportunity for prayer, reflection on Scripture and Church tradition, to deepen our understanding of what it means to follow Jesus, to be Easter people. Lockdown involves sacrificial living from us all. We're called to listen and heed the sensible advice from the Government and put the welfare and safety of others before ourselves. As St Paul says, *Love does not insist on its own way...but rejoices in the truth...Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.* In all the hardship of this present time we need to remember that we are enfolded in the love and security offered by Jesus our shepherd.

Our reading from Acts, St Luke's account of the fledgling church points us towards what 'finding pasture' within the sheepfold means in practice. Luke tells us that the disciples along with the newly baptized:

*Devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* [Acts 2:42]

What I find incredibly heartening during these strange and challenging times is our ability as a Christian community to find ways of gathering around the Lord's table albeit remotely. Zoom is a blessing that enables us to listen to the Lord's voice in Holy Scripture and find pasture and be fed through joining together in prayer and 'Spiritual Communion'. It will be a joyful day indeed when we can gather round the altar of the Lord together in 'real' time. Meanwhile in these times of enforced 'aloneness', we have space to listen to the One True Shepherd who knows us, loves us and calls us by name. We certainly have sacramental 'herd immunity' within the love of our Good Shepherd, our Risen Saviour, Jesus Christ.

So like those early Christians let us have *glad and generous hearts* and praise and thank our Lord who is ever faithful in all times and seasons. Listen to Him.