Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection: The person of Jesus Christ: 2) "I am the good shepherd" (Gospel of St John ch10 v11). In John ch10 v1-18, Jesus outlines the role of a good shepherd and states that He is a good one. In Israel, when Jesus was on the earth, sheep were usually kept at night in a pen, which was enclosed by a gate. This was to protect them from predators, such as thieves, robbers and wolves. When it was daylight, the shepherd led the sheep out of the pen. He went ahead of them, the sheep following him, listening to his voice.

He searched out good pasture for them to feed and pools of clean water from which they could drink. Sheep were very important, as Israel was an agricultural economy: sheep were kept for their meat, lamb was an integral part of the Passover meal and lambs were sacrificed in the Temple at Jerusalem. Sheep's fleeces were important for clothing and in the home. In John chapter 10, Jesus said that His sheep knew His voice and would not follow a stranger; He knew each one individually. He said that He was the gate and that whoever entered through Him would be saved (v9). He said that the thief came only to kill, steal and destroy but that He came that they might have life to the full (v10). Jesus reiterated that He was the good shepherd and that He knew His sheep and that they knew Him. He said He was prepared to lay down His life for them and take it up again. Jesus was speaking figuratively about mankind, foreshadowing the Crucifixion and Resurrection, when Jesus died for the sins of the world and was raised to life three days later. He said in the future there would be one flock and one shepherd (v16). In the Old Testament, there are many references to sheep and shepherds: - the most well-known is Psalm 23, written by David, which begins "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want." David, who was a great man of God, and who wrote many of the Psalms, as a young man worked as a shepherd looking after his father's sheep. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel and later became King of Israel. He lived many centuries before the birth of Christ, yet he knew God personally as his Shepherd (v1).

David knew that God cared for him not only physically but also spiritually (v2-3). Verse 4 is very well known and is often quoted at funerals, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." He knew that he would have no fear with his Shepherd guiding him and that death would not contain him. Shepherds carried rods and staffs with them: the rod had grooves made into it, so that the shepherd could count his sheep by fingering each groove individually. The staff was crooked at one end, so that the shepherd could control a wayward sheep by attaching the curved end to its horns and pulling it into line. In verse 5, David says that, despite the presence of his enemies, God prepared food for him. It goes onto say that his head was anointed with oil: this was a reference to his sacred bond with God, as oil was used in religious ceremonies. The Psalm concludes by David affirming that God's love would be continually with him both in this life and for eternity: "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever", (v6).

-Jane Stilling

Entrance antiphon: He fed them with the finest wheat and satisfied them with honey from the rock.

First Reading: Deuteronomy 8: 2-3, 14-16

Responsorial Psalm: 147, Response: O praise the Lord, Jerusalem!

Second Reading: 1Corinthians 10: 16-17 *(Sequence (Shorter form is said)*

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! I am the living bread which has come down from heaven, says the Lord. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever. Alleluia!

Gospel: John 6: 51-58

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him, says the Lord.