

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Hollywood Congregation

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Newsletter for the week of Sunday, 18 April

Dear friends,

Over the past months the word quarantine has been used a lot in connection with people arriving at our airports who have to isolate to make sure they don't bring new variants of the virus into the country.

The word quarantine comes from the Latin quadraginta and the Italian quaranta, both meaning "40 days". The 40 days occur many times in the bible and mostly relate to a time of testing, a time of waiting for an impulse to fully come into being:

- 40 days and 40 nights of rain when God flooded the Earth.
- 40 days of Moses on the mount receiving the 10 Commandments
- 40 days given to Nineveh to change their ways.
- 40 days between Christ's birth and his presentation in the temple.
- 40 days of Jesus being tempted by Satan in the wilderness.

In most churches people prepare for Easter with forty days of Lent in memory of Christ's time in the wilderness.

In The Christian Community we mark four weeks of Passiontide. Over this time we have the black as the altar colour. The fourth week of Passiontide is Holy Week.

Then with Easter Sunday, there begins a forty day period leading up to Ascension.

It is a time when we walk with the Risen One. Like He did for his disciples He now walks in the Spirit before us and leads us to Galilee.

We need this time to live with his presence, and allow for a time of dialogue with ourselves.

The forty days give us time to appreciate the qualities that we see around us in nature, which at this time of year, is like a Heaven on earth.

We can take these 40 days to explore what Resurrection might have to do with the ethereal beauty that we now experience in nature.

So for 40 days we celebrate the Easter service with its vestments in red, the colour of the light that overcomes the darkness and green, the fresh colour of new life.

In Clanabogan we have now returned to monthly services, in Mourne Grange to fortnightly services and in Hollywood to a fortnightly Sunday service.

But we will continue with the Thursday service where we have started to share communion again as it is easier to move around the chapel whilst keeping our distance when we are fewer in number. No-one should feel under any pressure either to come forward or to stay seated and accompany the process inwardly: this is a personal decision for each of us to take as individuals.

Our community room in Hollywood is also again open for study groups and other activities (up to 12 people).

But we will have to wait with having refreshments; maybe we start with those when the hospitality sector opens up.

Meanwhile, please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Ben van Lieshout

Hollywood

For the Sunday services please ring (02890424254), text (07974960570) or email (benvl@onetel.com) to book a place as we can only seat 11-13.

Easter

Thursday 15 th April	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00
Sunday 18th April	The Act of Consecration of Man Followed by talk and conversation: "Christ has invaded our pulse of life"	10.00
Thursday 22 th April	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.00

Mourne Grange (in Dawn Hall !)

Saturday 24 th April	The Act of Consecration of Man	10.15
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The gospel reading for Sunday 18 April is John 10: 1-21

"Yes, the truth I say to you: Anyone who does not go into the sheep through the door, but breaks into the fold elsewhere, he is a thief or robber. Only he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.

To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep respond to his voice. He calls each one by name, according to its nature, and he leads them out into the open.

When he has brought them out, he walks before them, and the sheep follow after him, for they trust his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but rather flee, because they do not know the stranger's voice."

Thus did Jesus reveal himself to them in pictures, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Then Jesus went on. "Yes, the truth out of the spirit I say to you. I AM the door to the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the sheep did not listen to them.

I AM the door. Anyone who enters through me will find healing and life. He learns to cross the threshold from here to beyond and from there to here, and he will find nourishment for his soul. The thief comes only to steal, and kill and destroy. But I - I have come that they may have life, and overflowing abundance.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who works for wages, and who is no true shepherd, whose sheep are not his own, he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep, and flees while the wolf snatches them and scatters them. For he is only a hireling and he cares nothing for the sheep.

I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD. I know who belongs to me, and my own recognize me, just as my Father recognizes me in the depths, and I know the being of the Father; and I offer my life for the sheep.

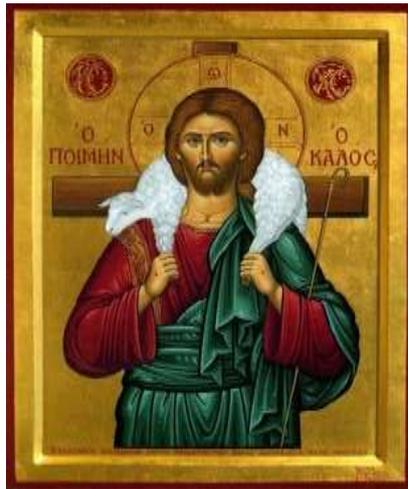
Other sheep have been entrusted to me who are not of this fold; I must also lead them. They too will listen to my voice, and one day there will be one flock, one

Shepherd.

That is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up anew. No one can take it from me. But in full freedom I myself offer it up. I have the power to give it away and also the power to receive it anew. That is the task given to me by my Father."

A homily on John 10:1-21

One of the earliest art images of Christ is that of the good shepherd. He is shown carrying a sheep across His shoulders.



Christ says of Himself that He is a good shepherd. A good shepherd is one that devotes himself to the welfare of his charges, so devoted that he will fight the devouring predator to save them. A good shepherd not only protects the whole flock; he also knows each individual sheep by name. He guides all to pasture and back home again, regardless of cost to himself. In fact, he bears responsibility for a wider flock, flocks in other communities.

Conducting a life in Christ means that we too can be good shepherds. We can pay loving attention to each individual in the flock of our friends, family and acquaintances. We can keep a sharp lookout for the destructive social forces that attack and scatter.

And we can also be good shepherds of all the various voices and archetypes within ourselves. We can pay loving attention to all the inner voices that speak in our souls; we can deflect the negative inner predator who divides and devours our energies.

In the words of George Herbert:

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My soul's a shepherd too; a flock it feeds
Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
The pasture is Thy words; the streams, Thy grace
Enriching all the place.
Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Out-sing the daylight hours.

In this prayer against fear, Adam Bittleston tells us how we can experience the good shepherd in our life:

May the events that seek me
Come unto me.
May I receive them
With a quiet mind
Through the Father's ground of peace
On which we walk.

May the people who seek me
Come unto me.
May I receive them
With an understanding heart
Through the Christ's stream of love
In which we live.

May the spirits which seek me
Come unto me.
May I receive them
With a clear soul
Through the healing Spirit's Light
By which we see.