

The Easter Garden

The modern Easter garden probably has its origins in the medieval custom of the Easter Sepulchre: on Good Friday the Blessed Sacrament was ceremonially 'buried' in a 'Sepulchre' and raised in triumph on Easter morning. The custom was especially popular in England where the Sepulchre often became an architectural feature of the church: an elaborately carved stone niche, often with scenes of the Easter story, found near the church's high altar. Many such sepulchres can still be seen, especially in East Anglia. The modern Easter garden, which like the Easter Sepulchre is often a focus for devotion and prayer, nearly always includes three features: a mound with (usually) three wooden crosses to represent Calvary, a structure, often with a stone rolled away, to suggest the empty tomb, and lots of flowers and greenery. Sometimes figures of the risen Lord, the angel and the women are also included.

Prayers to Remember

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, We have offended against thy holy laws, We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, And we have done those things which we ought not to have done; And there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesu our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.

General Confession, Book of Common Prayer (1662).

From the Fathers

For the sake of his flock, the shepherd was sacrificed as though he were a sheep. He did not refuse death. He did not destroy his executioners as he had the power to do, for his passion was not forced on him. He laid down his life for his sheep of his own free will. "I have the power to lay it down," he said, "and I have the power to take it up again." By his passion he made atonement for our evil passions, by his death he cured our death, by his tomb he robbed the tomb, by the nails that pierced his flesh he destroyed the foundations of hell.

Death held sway until Christ died. The grave was bitter, our prison was indestructible, until the Shepherd went down and brought to his sheep confined there the good news of their release. His appearance among them gave them a pledge of their resurrection and called them to a new life beyond the grave. "The good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" and so seeks to win their love.

From the Homilies of Basil of Seleucia (5th century)

25th April
2021

The Fourth Sunday
of Easter

The Good Shepherd



Jesus is the Good Shepherd; we are the sheep. Sheep are notorious for straying, ignoring danger, and putting themselves at risk. We human beings have a lot in common with sheep! We too are notorious for straying from the path. We don't always recognise the spiritual danger we are in – the Scripture tells us that our adversary, the devil, is like a roaring lion, prowling around looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5.8) – in fact we err and stray like lost sheep, right into the path of danger. If we are to hear the voice of the Shepherd, we need to make time and space to be still and learn to listen. It is only when we are still that we will hear the Shepherd, guiding and leading us in the right paths and keeping us safe from harm. The sheep who are close to the Shepherd will be safe. Let us not stray from him.