

Bulletin 8 – 4th Sunday of Easter – Vocations Sunday

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Welcome to this week's Bulletin.

This Sunday is **Good Shepherd Sunday** when we traditionally pray for vocations to the priesthood for our diocese. Usually on Good Shepherd Sunday our seminarians travel to parishes to speak about vocations. This year three of them, Michael Barwick, Jonathan Burden and Deacon Paschal Uche have recorded video messages in place of this. You can watch them with the following link:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1Gs_cDHv-pew1BupiuyitH8u37_8bWjU We continue to have evenings for those who would like to enquire about a vocation to the priesthood. At the moment these are being held online. Please get in touch with Fr Mark Swires at vocprom@dioceseofbrentwood.org for more information. Please continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life and also that all of us may be able to hear what God is asking us to do.

Visit: <https://www.brentwoodvocations.co.uk>

Acts at Easter – in lockdown. Lockdown may provide us with opportunities to dedicate more time to the reading of Scripture, celebrating our own Liturgy of the Word. Throughout the Easter season we read from the Acts of the Apostles, seeing how the Easter gospel is preached in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Fr Adrian Graffy has recorded a talk on the opening eight chapters of Acts, which is now available on www.whatgoodnews.org/faith-talks. It is hoped to provide a further talk later in the Easter season.

MASS INTENTIONS

Sunday 3 rd	– Fourth Sunday of Easter	– People of our Parish
Monday 4 th	– The English Martyrs	– Maureen Herbert (in sickness)
Tuesday 5 th	– Jim Birchall (RIP)	
Wednesday 6 th	– St John Payne	- Isabella MacDermott (RIP)
Thursday 7 th	– John Hogan (RIP)	
Friday 8 th	– Fr. Gerald Hughes (RIP)	
Saturday 9 th	– Keith Harris (RIP)	
Sunday	– Fifth Sunday of Easter	– People of our Parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

"I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe."

Gates and doors play a major role in the symbolism of our spiritual lives. I have spoken before of the Holman Hunt painting *The Light of the World*, depicting Jesus knocking on a long-neglected door which has no handle on his side. The Romans were inordinately fond of their triumphal arches built for conquering generals and emperors. A common traditional image of life after death is that of the "pearly gates" with St Peter checking people in. It is a symbol that celebrates the threshold to something new but it also carries with it the thought of closure and no entry.

In the parable told to his disciples by Jesus in today's Gospel the disciples fail to understand the story when it is first told to them. As usual we look to the end of the story to see what point is being made. Jesus is warning his followers about being led astray by those who are not preachers of the truth. As sheep recognise the voice of their shepherd, his followers too need to recognise his voice and follow him. In his explanation of the parable Jesus then develops another thought. He offers the idea that he is the gate of the sheepfold. It is through him that the sheep go safely in and out.

His words are an anticipation of how he will help his disciples come to terms with his leaving them, saying that they know the way to where he is going. As we shall hear next Sunday Thomas objects that they do not know where he is going, so how can they know the way? To which comes the famous reply that Jesus himself is "the Way, the Truth and the Life". It is very much a theme that recurs in John's Gospel, this centring of our belief on the person of Jesus. It is by believing in him, recognising his voice, clinging to him that we receive the gift of eternal life. Once we do that we are free to come and go through the gate, always sure of finding nourishment. The intention of thieves is to steal, kill and destroy; the aim of Jesus is to offer us life in all its fullness.

Do we see gates as the threshold to freedom or insurmountable barriers? In his epic poem *Divine Comedy*, the fourteenth-century writer Dante imagined the gates of hell had "Abandon hope all you who enter here" written above them. The parable speaks of "thieves and brigands" trying to enter through the gate. When cities were walled their gates were often the only way of entering and so were guarded carefully and closed at night. But another stratagem of thieves and brigands was to enter the city surreptitiously and then open the gates illegally in the middle of the night. The capture and destruction of Troy by the Greeks, described in Homer's *Iliad*, is the most famous example of this.

We are now in lockdown, and so many doors are closed for safety sake, shops, cafes, pubs even church doors are kept locked in an attempt to combat this dreadful virus. Many of us are being confined to our homes not just to save our own life but to protect the lives of others. This enforced isolation, often brings despair in loneliness, we humans are social animals, we need each other and touch is so very important to our wellbeing.

Yet this time has positive consequences too. This time can be used to contemplate that our Risen Lord Jesus is our Good Shepherd, who will never leave us, he is the one person who standing at our door and knocking we can with complete confidence invite into our homes, our hearts.

END NOTES

We will continue to produce a weekly Bulletin for all our parishioners and to publish it on our website. However, from next week onwards we will post it on our parish website only and Deacon Michael will send you a notification when the Bulletin is available together with the link to the website. This will make things a little easier for us.

Please be assured of my prayers for you and if you need to speak to me or Deacon Michael then do get in touch.
Stay well and God Bless

Fr. John

Contact Details –

For those who would like to speak with me on any matter please telephone 01279 429388 or email me on john.corbyn@btinternet.com