

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady**  
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**BULLETIN B 22 – 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**  
**THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

My dear brothers and sisters,

This Sunday is known as Good Shepherd Sunday Jesus, our good shepherd, invites each one of us to know and to follow him more closely. Today is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, on which we pray especially for vocations to the priestly, the religious and the consecrated life.

We all have a vocation, a calling by God to a particular ministry, in the Church or in the world, and our hearts are restless, St Augustine says, until we find rest in him. Only when we say yes to God and what he is calling us to be will we find true contentment. The Church needs priests, Jesus calls many men to be his priests, and too few are answering that call. If you are one of those or you know someone that God is obviously calling, come and talk to me or some other priest and I will be able, when you are ready, to point you in the direction of those whose job it is to discern vocations to ministry.

Some who are called resist because they feel they are not clever enough or they are unworthy. Don't do that, just think of me! You know that when God calls, he also equips, and God will gift you all that you need to fulfil his dream for you.

I urge all of you to watch this short video about vocation, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9ycynjmrDU> it features someone and a Church you know very well.

Please pray for vocations to be answered, maybe using the prayer below.

God Bless you all.

Fr. John

**TIMES OF MASS THIS WEEK**

Sun	25	4 <sup>th</sup> of Easter	1000 Mass	people of the Parish
			1800 Mass	Gertrude Finden (RIP)
Tue	27	OL Good Counsel	1900 Mass	Brian Davis (RIP)
Wed	28	St.Peter Chanel	1000 Mass	Frank Skuse (RIP)
			1030 Adoration	
Thu	29	St.Catherine of Siena	1000 Mass	Patrick & Kathleen McMahon
			1030 Adoration	
Fri	30	feria of Easter	1000 Mass	Vic Potter (RIP)
Sun	2	5 <sup>th</sup> of Easter	1000 Mass	people of the parish
			1800 Mass	

**Prayer to Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel:**

*O, Holy Virgin, to whose feet we are led by our anxious uncertainty in our search for and attainment of what is true and good, invoking thee by the sweet title of Mother of Good Counsel we beseech thee to come to our assistance, when along the road of this life, the darkness of error and of evil conspires towards our ruin by leading our minds and our hearts astray.*

*Do Thou, O Seat of Wisdom and Star of the Sea, Enlighten the doubtful and the erring, that they be not seduced by the false appearances of good, render them steadfast in the face of the hostile and corrupting influences of passion and of sin.*

*O Mother of Good Counsel, obtain for us from Thy Divine Son a great love of Virtue and, in the hour of uncertainty and trial, the strength to embrace the way that leads to our salvation. If Thy hand sustains us, we shall walk unmolested long the path indicated to us by the life and words of Jesus our Redeemer; and having followed freely and securely, even in the midst of this world's strife, the sun of truth and justice under Thy Maternal Star, we shall come to the enjoyment of full and eternal peace with Thee in the Haven of Salvation. Amen.*

## GOSPEL REFLECTION

You might be surprised that a UK television programme about sheepdog trials should be so popular, but *One Man and His Dog* has been broadcast since 1976 and continues to attract millions of viewers. Most may be townspeople who love the views of open countryside, yet this is no pastoral idyll. It is an intense competition between rival shepherds. Their aim is to herd a flock of sheep into a small pen in as short a time as possible. The sheep want nothing better than to roam free, so shepherds must exercise cunning. Standing at a distance, they communicate to their dog with calls and whistles. The dog then circles the sheep, trying to keep the flock together, gradually manoeuvring them towards the pen. At last the gate swings shut. How clever that dog is, we may think, and how silly those sheep – they always seem to scatter at the last minute, or veer off in the wrong direction.

Maybe the sheep are not so silly after all. They are just trying to avoid getting fenced in. And who could blame them for running from what may look uncomfortably like a wolf? Exploiting the hunting instinct of dogs, and the instinct of sheep to flee predators, is what this kind of shepherding is about, for at the appearance of a dog, sheep naturally run. Some people's lives may feel like this – as though they are being driven by fear in a direction they do not want to go.

Shepherding was very different in Jesus' day. Shepherds did not "drive" their sheep: they walked with them, or went ahead if the path was narrow. Shepherds knew each sheep by name and understood their needs. If a wolf appeared, they would see it off. The sheep knew their shepherd and trusted that the shepherd was not trying to take away their freedom. On the contrary, the shepherd was expanding their horizons, for the springtime grass which carpeted the Judaeen hillsides soon turned brown, so shepherds would need to keep leading them to fresh pasture. They might even cut down leafy branches to feed their sheep. When the time came to move on, they would call to them and, hearing their names, the sheep came willingly. Waiting for the stragglers, the shepherd set off and, wherever the shepherd went, the sheep would be sure to follow.

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes himself as that kind of shepherd, leading us, his flock, to where he knows we will find personal nourishment and fulfilment. We are known to him as individuals. We can trust him, for Jesus gave his life for us. No one made him do it; he did it because he loves us. That is the difference between a job and a vocation: the feeling of being called to something; doing it because you care; not looking for reward or recognition, just wanting to give.

Self-gift is never a waste. Dedicated people in all walks of life find fulfilment in the giving of themselves. Doing a good job matters; people matter. For some, work is more than a livelihood, it is a calling, and vocation is a word we associate particularly with the priestly, religious and consecrated life. Others may discover their vocation in the experience of parenthood, for example, or in their involvement with some worthwhile cause. It is certain that God calls each of us to some particular Christian service.

Many factors influence our life choices and it is not always easy to recognise what or who might be calling us in any particular direction. However, if it feels as though you are being pushed or persuaded, it is unlikely to be the voice of Jesus. Jesus, our good shepherd, knows us as individuals, each with our own personality and giftedness. He does not force or manipulate: he invites. Nor does he stand by as we struggle: he accompanies us. Occasionally he picks us up and carries us, for the day may come when God will call others to support us, instead of us caring for them: then we will have to learn a new way of being. None of us knows what we are to be in the future but, as St John tells us, "we shall be like him". That is the primary vocation of us all: to be like Jesus. While we need aptitude and skills to be nurses, engineers, parents, priests or whatever service to which God calls us, only our likeness to Jesus makes us *good* nurses, *good* engineers, *good* parents... *good* shepherds.

## PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Lord Jesus Christ, You have chosen the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops and Priests of the Catholic Church, to preach the true faith throughout the whole world. We earnestly beseech You to choose from among us in our parishes, priests and religious who will gladly spend their entire lives to make You better known and loved.

Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us. Immaculate Heart of Mary pray for us. St Joseph pray for us. St John Vianney pray for us.