

**Parish of the Assumption of Our Lady
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**BULLETIN C 24 – 8TH MAY 2022
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER – GOOD SHEPHERD**

My dear brothers and sisters,

Today as we contemplate the Lord Jesus as our “Good Shepherd”, the church asks us to pray for Vocations, especially to the Priesthood. There is as we know a shortage of priests in our Diocese.

There is no shortage of those whom God is calling, it’s just that many can’t hear the voice of the Lord calling them. Maybe some hear that call, but are afraid of what the priestly life entails. Let me assure them, if God is calling them, then there is no greater joy they will ever realise in their life. Please do pray this week for Vocations. There will be a retiring collection to promote vocations at all masses today.

Our Finance Committee met this week and accepted the accounts for last year (ended 5th April 2022) and set the Budget for this financial year. Copies of this will be available as you leave Mass today. Member of the committee will be available to answer questions over coffee this morning.

The Sonare Concert is on Saturday this week in church at 4.00pm.

God bless you all
Fr. John

TIMES OF MASSES THIS WEEK

Sun	8	4 th of Easter	1000 Sung Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	Vocations Vic Potter (RIP) People of the Parish
Tue	10	feria of Eastertime	1900 Mass	Skuse Family (RIP)
Wed	11	feria of Eastertime	1000 Mass	Sadie Bell (RIP)
Thu	12	St. John Houghton	1000 Mass	Ellis Family (RIP)
Fri	13	Our Lady of Fatima	1000 Mass	Fatima Parish (INT)
Sun	15	5 th of Easter	1000 Sung Mass 1200 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Peace in Ukraine

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Loving Father, you call us by name.

As we journey through life help us to be confident in our own unique identity
and to find opportunities to develop our own gifts and passions.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will pour on us wisdom and guidance
to help us realise and follow our dreams, discerning your plan for our lives.

Bless your Church by raising up dedicated and generous people from our families and friends
who will serve as Priests, Deacons, Sisters and Brothers.

May we support one another in response to God’s call. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOSPEL REFLECTION

A priest on pilgrimage in the Holy Land described how he watched two shepherds talking together while their sheep milled around them in the valley beneath him. The sound of their voices carried up to him on the hillside. After a while the shepherds parted and went off in opposite directions, all the while keeping up a “kind of conversation” with the sheep. To the priest’s astonishment the sheep separated from one another and sorted themselves out into two flocks, each one going after its own shepherd. It was a perfect illustration, the priest said, of sheep recognising the voice of their shepherd and following him. We can only marvel at the instinct by which the sheep recognised the voice of their own shepherd and didn’t follow the other one. We see the same instinct at work among penguins, who in a crowd of thousands manage to find their own offspring.

Pope Francis once commented on what he called “the mystery of the voice”. He said, “The mystery of the voice is suggestive: we think about how from our mother’s womb we learn to recognise her voice and our father’s voice; from the tone of someone’s voice we can perceive love or scorn, affection or coldness.”

In today’s Gospel Jesus observes how the “sheep that belong to me listen to my voice”. He is making a claim that we can verify. Every human being, young and old, good and bad, has a conscience. Conscience is, St John Henry Newman taught, “the voice of God”. For Newman conscience is a proof of God’s existence. “Every human being has a certain commanding dictate... an authoritative voice, bidding him do certain things and avoid others.” If we want to know whether we should do a certain thing we only have to ask ourselves and our conscience will give us the answer. Often enough our conscience will kick in before we ask it, warning us not to go down this way or that. More positively it will lead us where we should go. Listening to this voice is how we find our vocation in life. Furthermore, what our conscience tells us is confirmed in scripture. The scriptures are the revealed word of God. “The word of the Lord,” the reader proclaims at the end of each reading. There can never be a conflict between what God tells us in our conscience and what God tells us in the scriptures. It is the same voice speaking in two different ways.

But there is what we might call a “false conscience”, persuading us that our conscience is nonsense; that the scriptures are untrue; that our faith is unfounded; that we can do whatever we feel like doing. A man once told a priest that he thought God was telling him to leave his wife and marry another woman who was a more devout Catholic. The priest reminded him of a reading he had heard at Mass: “You shall not commit adultery.” What the man thought God was telling him could not have been God, but his own fantasising.

Many voices speak to us through the media: experts, philosophers, scientists and thinkers; good people of great wisdom and reason. They help form our views. Pope St John Paul II, a philosopher himself, never belittled human reason. He wrote: “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth.” But even the most intelligent people can be wrong: not all the opinions we hear are right, so we test them by faith. Saints recognise the inner voice of God with clarity because they habitually listen to it. They are not easily deceived or misled. They trust the teachings of the Church, meditate on the scriptures and pray, listening to that still small voice which comes into our mind.

“The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice... they will never be lost,” says Jesus. The more we listen and obey what we hear (for we are free to ignore it), the more easily do we distinguish the voice of our shepherd from alien and mistaken voices or our own imagining. Pope Francis wrote, “When we learn to distinguish [Christ’s voice] from others, he will lead us along the path of life, a path that stretches even beyond death.”