



HAVE NO FEAR

GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY & 57TH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

3 MAY 2020

The Fourth Sunday of Easter (3rd May 2020) is called “Good Shepherd Sunday” because the Gospel at Mass always draws on the image of Jesus as our Good Shepherd. It’s also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The word “vocation” comes from the Latin word “vocare”, meaning “to call”, and the word “voice” is closely related - and for us as Christians the most important voice of all is the voice of Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

This Sunday we hear Jesus saying “When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice” (John 10:4). Jesus has already called each one of us by name through our baptism - and we have responded to his call. That’s worth celebrating! But his call is not simply something from the past – and neither is our response simply a one-time decision we have made. Rather he continues to “go ahead of us”, and the challenge for us is to continue to follow his voice every day.

Now, this voice is not always as loud and clear as we may want it to be. Why not, we may wonder? In the words of Pope Francis “God comes silently and discreetly, without imposing on our freedom” (Message for World Day of Vocations, 2018). This means that one of the biggest challenges of modern times has been hearing that quiet, gentle voice of God when there is so much other noise and activity clamouring for our attention.

But this year is different. This year we have entered together into one of the most unique periods of our lives. So many of the usual commitments and activities that fill our lives have been stripped away, for a time. This has understandably caused much grief to many of us; but on the other hand there is a unique opportunity being offered to us at this time to hear that quiet voice of our Good Shepherd more clearly – guiding us in our everyday lives, and also guiding especially you young people in your discernment of your life’s calling.

Pope Francis in his message this year for the 57th World Day of Vocations, draws on the Gospel encounter in which Jesus walks on the water towards the Apostles’ boat in the midst of a storm. The Pope reflects:

“When the disciples see Jesus walking towards them on the sea, they first think that he is a ghost and are filled with fear. Jesus immediately reassures them with words that should constantly accompany our lives and our vocational journey: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” ...What frequently hinders our journey, our growth, our choosing the road the Lord is marking out for us, are certain “ghosts” that trouble our hearts.

When we are called to leave safe shores and embrace a state of life – like marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life – our first reaction is often from the “ghost of disbelief”. Surely, this vocation is not for me! Can this really be the right path? Is the Lord really asking me to do this?”

I know I can relate to these words of the Pope. There were times in my own life when my response to God’s call to priesthood was precisely disbelief, or doubt, or fear - but the

Good Shepherd kept gently calling, guiding me one step at a time to this life of a priest - and I’m always surprised by the joy I’ve found in this way of life, which I never would have planned for myself.

May all of us, whatever our vocation, and especially those of you still discerning your vocation, come to hear the quiet voice of our Good Shepherd more clearly during this time. And may we come to a deeper surrender to his call: trusting, as he reminds us this Sunday, that he has come that we may have life, and have it to the full.

Fr Duane Fernandez

Vocations Director

Diocese of Wollongong

If you would like help discerning whether you are called to marriage, single life, consecrated life or ordained ministry, please contact Fr Duane Fernandez at vocations@dow.org.au

“... there is a unique opportunity being offered to us at this time to hear that quiet voice of our Good Shepherd more clearly ...”