

Vocations Sunday

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you! I have great joy in writing my first Pastoral Letter to the Young People of the Diocese and, of course, to the Priests and People of God on this Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday or Vocations Sunday. I am very happy to talk about the important issue of Vocations in my first letter to you and to encourage everyone to redouble our efforts in praying for Vocations to the Priesthood.

In today's Gospel Christ tells us that the shepherd goes ahead of his flock and the sheep follow because they know his voice. Christ is our Good Shepherd who always leads us in the ways of God's love. We hear His voice in the Scriptures and in the Sacraments. We hear His voice in the quiet of our own hearts, leading us to safe pastures.

My dear young people, in your lives you hear so many other voices with their competing opportunities and it is so easy to get lost in a welter of distractions as you wonder about how best to channel all your young energy and enthusiasm into making a better world. But I have great confidence in you! I know that even now God is calling a number from your ranks to serve Him as Priests and Religious, giving Him your lives completely in loving service of His Church and in helping to renew our country.

I know that at times it is difficult for the message to get through to you but I put all my trust in Jesus who calls and leads you "one by one". Try to give Him some of your time each day in prayer, listening to Him speaking to you in the Scriptures and then talk to Him freely in the quiet of your hearts. You will find that no one is as attractive as He is and that when He calls you to follow Him nothing else will ever satisfy your soul.

I hope to have many occasions in the future to speak to all our young people who fill our Church with so much life and joy but, today, I want to speak directly to our young men. Dear sons, Our Lord promises He will never leave His flock untended and we need more Priests! We need more men to share with joy the word of God which they have received and to administer the Sacraments for the salvation of all God's people.

To become a priest is to enter a life that is at odds with our present culture. But what can be a more fulfilling life than being entrusted by Christ to look after his people in all their joys and sorrows, their ups and downs: to laugh with them, to mourn with them when they are crying. In Baptism the Priest brings new life into the Church; in

Confession he brings the forgiveness and peace of Christ as well as healing from the wounds of sin; with Holy Oils he consoles the sick; and of course in the celebration of Holy Mass he feeds them with the Body and Blood of The Lord. What a life! And it is a life to which many men are still called. If you sense in your heart that call then do not be afraid. Be generous and look forward to serving the Lord with gladness. Be full of hope and trust that the call of God to you is genuine. Through prayer you will soon discover that the grace of Christ will sustain, support and gladden your heart. Speak to your Priest, speak to your family, come and speak to me, and let the adventure of working for the Good Shepherd begin. It is a heroic life – a life for saints!

I encourage you, dear people of Paisley to pray for our Priests and to pray for more Priests. So often when a man is being called to the priesthood he finds little support even among his family and loved ones. To give up everything you have in order to follow The Lord is a wonderful thing. It is never a waste. So if one of your sons or grandsons feels the call of The Lord to the priesthood please find it in yourself to encourage that call which alone will bring him the joy and fulfilment you desire for him.

At the end of the Gospel today Jesus Christ says “I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full.” It is Christ who gives us life, and life in abundance! Let us all implore Him to renew our Diocese with fresh and vibrant vocations and, in this month of devotion to Our Lady, let us ask Our Blessed Mother confidently to intercede with The Lord of the Harvest for good Priests who are prepared to take the Joy of the Gospel, the power of the Sacraments, and the life of Christ into the world

May God bless you all!

+John