

## Homily 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Easter Year A - Good Shepherd – Vocations - 2023

**Pope Francis** writes about **Vocations** :

This is the 60<sup>th</sup> celebration of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations inviting us to respond to the call and mission that the Lord entrusts to each of us, amidst the world's afflictions, hopes, challenges and achievements. Francis asks us to see our Vocation as a **Grace and a Mission**.

The Lord's call is a grace, a complete gift, calling us to commit ourselves to bring the Gospel to others and see our mission as God's work carried out with our brothers and sisters. God's dream is that we live with him in a communion of love.

St Paul writes that the Father "*chose us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will*" (Eph 1:4-5). We were created by love, for love and with love. **We are made for love!**

This call is in the fibre of our being and holds the secret of happiness. It comes to us through the Holy Spirit in ever new ways; enlightening our minds, strengthening our wills, filling us with amazement and setting our hearts afire. At times, the Spirit comes in completely unexpected ways. God's call for the gift of self tends to make itself known gradually: in our encounters with situations of poverty, in moments of prayer, when we see a clear witness to the Gospel or read something that opens our minds. We can hear God's word and sense that it is spoken directly to us in the advice given by a fellow brother or sister and in moments of sickness or sorrow.

The gift of vocation, like a divine seed, springs up and opens our hearts to God and to others. God calls us in love and, in gratitude, we respond in love. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus exclaimed, "*At last I have found my calling: my call is love. Indeed, I have found my proper place in the Church... In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be love*".

However, there is no vocation without **mission!** God's call to love does not allow us to remain silent. Our shared mission as Christians is to bear joyful witness to the experience of being with Jesus and members of his community, the Church. This mission is expressed in material and spiritual works of mercy, in a welcoming and gentle way of life that reflects closeness, compassion and tenderness, in contrast to a culture of waste and indifference. By being a neighbour, we come to understand the heart of our Christian vocation: to imitate Jesus Christ, who came to serve, not to be served (cf. Mk 10:45).

This missionary activity is the result of a profound experience in the company of Jesus. Only then can we testify to a Person, a Life, and thus become "apostles". Only then can we regard ourselves as "*sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising, healing and freeing.*" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 273).

The Church is an ***Ecclesia***, an assembly of people called and convened. It calls us to form a community of missionary disciples of Jesus Christ committed to sharing love (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12) and spreading that love to others, so that God's kingdom may come.

Within the Church, we are servants with a variety of charisms and ministries. Our common vocation to give ourselves in love develops and finds concrete expression in the life of lay men and women, devoted to raising a family as a small *domestic church* and working as a leaven of the Gospel to renew different areas of society. It is found in the testimony of consecrated women and men completely committed to God for the sake of their brothers and sisters as a prophetic sign of the kingdom of God; in ordained ministers – deacons, priests and bishops – placed at the service of preaching, prayer and fostering the communion of the holy People of God. Only in relation with all the others, does any particular vocation in the Church fully disclose its true nature and richness. The Church is a vocational "symphony", with every vocation united yet distinct, in harmony and joined together in "going forth" to radiate throughout the world the new life of the kingdom of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, vocation is a gift and a task, a source of new life and true joy. May the Virgin Mary watch over you and protect you: **with my blessing**.

**One day a young boy was driving a load of grain to the market.** Coming round a corner too fast, his trailer full of grain tipped over. A farmer watching nearby asked the boy to come into his house for lunch. The boy replied, "my father would not like it."

The farmer insisted and told him it wouldn't take too long and afterwards he would help him reload the grain onto his trailer. The boy agreed and went into the house for lunch.

The lunch was wonderful and was exactly what he needed. As the farmer and boy left the house, the farmer asked why the boy had said his dad wouldn't like for him to eat lunch with him.

The boy replied, "**Well, my father is under the trailer!**"