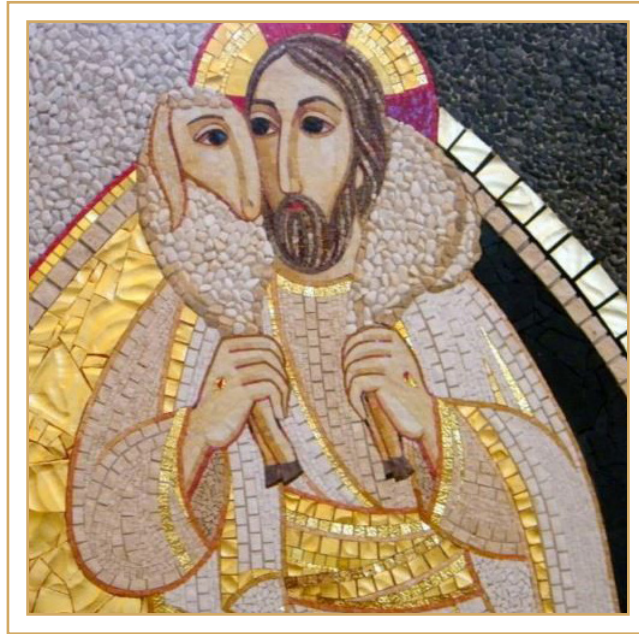


Pastoral Message for Good Shepherd Sunday – 25 April 2021



Bishop Denis Nulty
Apostolic Administrator of Ossory



The Good Shepherd, Marko Ivan Rupnik, S.J.

“But must not some one of us say something about God, about eternal life, about the majesty of grace in our sanctified being”

I was reflecting recently that it is now forty years since I entered the seminary. It was a decision I never regretted. Over these past few days I read an article in which a priest was reflecting on the areas of his ministry that give him life, in many ways I could see myself, and all of us, called to religious vocation in that article. A reflection that took as its starting point this wonderful quote of, the German Theologian, Karl Rahner. It, rightly, reminds us of the imperative of some saying something about God in our world. A voice is needed. We are not finite creatures limited merely to some earthly dwelling, we are wonderfully carved in the hand of God and destined to return to his side. If we were to forget to speak of this reality in our world we would reduce ourselves to something we are not. Talk of God, then, this necessary talk, reminds us of the vastness of our human potential. Talk of God reminds us of the divine that exists in each of us. Talk of God, then, is to speak of a real hope for humanity.

“But must not some one of us say something about God...”

Priesthood and religious life respond positively to this need in our world today. A life lived in this way is a life lived for others, to remind them of how special they are in the eyes of God. The religious sister, the priest, the brother, the lay missionary remind us that there is more to life than mere economics; there is more to life than mere existence; there is more to life than merely living. The existence of a life of vocation in our communities is living proof that humanity is destined for more; its gaze drifts beyond the limits of a finite world. The existence of a life of vocation reminds humanity to dream, not just in sacred moments but in secular too, of what we are destined to become.

Pope Francis in this year's message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations reflects on the power of dreams in the life of St Joseph, for whom we are currently holding a special year of devotion. Dreams for Joseph, he noted, were calls from God requiring a response. His first led to marriage and made him the father of Jesus; the second led him to flee Egypt to save his family; the third told of his return home; the fourth brought him to Nazareth from where Jesus would begin (cf Mt 1:20; 2:13.19.22). The dreams of Joseph, then, led him - to new places, to safety, through the familiar, to a new start.

In life too it is our dreams, important dreams, that continually lead us. The young student is led by dreams of a career, the young scientist is led by dreams of some great discovery, the young sports person is led by dreams of some great result or achievement. Dreams call us forward to new places. They ensure that we don't settle for now. They encourage growth, progression and advancement.

“But must not some one of us say something about God...”

The life of priesthood which I have lived for the past thirty-three years has afforded me many opportunities to journey with people at the most sacred of times: at moments of birth, at the time of death, at the celebration of great love that is marriage and at many, many, wonderful sacramental celebrations of significant personal milestones. It is at these points, for many people, that dreams are hatched, futures are planned and goals are set. At these points, then, it is good that someone is speaking too of the divine possibility that is rooted in our human nature. At these points we do not want to hear of the limits but rather of the limitless possibilities for our humanity. Our goals and dreams should be so lofty as to demand an horizon far beyond the gaze of this world. Someone needs to whisper that, in these moments.

“But must not some one of us say something about God, about eternal life, about the majesty of grace in our sanctified being”

Going back to 1981, that dream brought me to the road of formation. A journey that I believe equips me, in prayer, for whatever challenges life throws up. Wake up the world... dream big... speak it today. Shift the gaze of others to higher horizons. Be a reminder of the divine that is present in every human being. Why not consider a life of Priesthood or Religious life? Contact Fr Kieran O'Shea vocations@ossory.ie to explore a vocation.

Diocese of Ossory Prayer for Vocations to Priesthood

Lord Jesus, we believe that you continue to scatter the seeds of vocation in the hearts of young people today. Help us to nourish those seeds with encouragement and support so so that they will take root, grow, and bear fruit.

Give to all who are called the courage they need to take a first step on a journey of discovery which will lead them to that place where they will encounter you Lord and discern the road you invite them to follow.

Lord, fill young hearts with a spirit of loving service care and respect for themselves and others. Provide your Church in Ossory with humble shepherds who will work with their Sisters and Brothers in a spirit of co-responsibility for your Church.

Amen

Mary Mother of Vocations, Pray with us for Vocations

St Kieran, pray with us for Vocations

St Canice, pray with us for Vocations

St Feargal, pray with us for Vocations

St Fiakra, pray with us for Vocations

All saints of Ossory, pray with us for Vocations