

4th Sunday Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday
Acts 2:14, 36-41, 1 Peter 2:20-25, John 10:1-10

As we gather for Eucharist, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, it is: World Day of Prayer for Vocations. I think to myself what does the future hold for our Church; what will it look like next year, 5 years, 10 years down the track?

What will it look like, I do not know, but this church has many people in it here now, you all have a story to tell and a journey of faith that you have experienced. There are many good people as I look around, both young and old and I think to myself what does the future hold for our Church: it holds you, and I challenge you here today to imagine what it looks like *for you!* **Imagine you living out your faith** in such a way that **people can see the person of Jesus Christ lived out in your life** and want to join this church with you.

Our dreams for this church are only that, simple dreams, unless we make the dreams and our imagination come to life. To believe that amidst the difficulties, the person of Jesus Christ is with us and in us to bring life to these images, which will bring life to our church. **Have you the courage to live out your dreams for the church, to imagine not what someone else is doing, but what are you doing in your faith life: to inspire; to bring life; to renew your own hope in Jesus.**

Like I said, I do not know what it might look like, but I do know that it is not only up to the priest, but it is up to you the community. It is up to you to come together as a community, people from within this group to stand and be witnesses of faith in your families and in the world. To make your faith relevant when many say that it is not; to believe that from within this community people will come forward by **your witness and encouragement.**

What it looks like is experiencing a personal relationship with Jesus, not something that you take from here, but something that you give here – to each other – to those you love, a relationship which calls each of us by name to make a difference. To make a difference so that when church is mentioned it is not something that is a chore but is a family coming together in their struggles to share with each other their faith. To make a difference at work where you stand up for what is right and just, instead of looking the other way. To make a difference at home when looking to find direction or answers, we look to prayer and a relationship with Jesus to find the way, where we do not close the door to each other. It looks like you being alive with your faith in a Jesus not from a time past, but of right now in your hearts, to be alive with enthusiasm regardless of how hard or difficult life may seem. It is forgiveness, it is compassion, it is mercy.

I ask myself why me? What is it that draws me on and into priesthood? The answer is that YOU DO. While there are people in our community living, loving and forgiving each other, God is in our midst and calls each of us in our own way to respond.

I would describe the journey as **radically different** to what I thought my life was going to be. A sheep farmer from the west becoming a priest! It would seem the most ridiculous thing to do to become a priest in these times, everything society says or promotes would say **NO don't do it**. There is no need for church or religion in our time or in our life, it has no meaning.

Reading the signs of the times I would say now more than ever **we need the family and people to witness a way of love which calls us to a radical new way of life not just for ourselves but for all**.

It is the sharing of our love for each other and commitment to our faith which counts and if we stop asking the question: **"have you thought about life as a priest or religious,"** we will not recognize the Jesus who calls each of us forward: the Jesus who in the lives of priests and religious before us who have shared their faith and commitment to a way of life. **Families have been witnesses to the calling of these people. God has called them through your witness and your love.** It is a radical commitment and way of life not simply as priest or religious but as a people who go out to each other and share faith with each other. God challenges us to respond to this love in some way. I continue on this journey because of you and your witness.

This is your vocation – this is what inspires and encourages people – encourages *your children – the people that you know* – **to want to become ministers amongst you**. To lead community in prayer and worship – to be called forward by you from within this church – from within your schools – your workplaces – your families. This is our vocation to priesthood – this is our journey – because this is our church.

We pray for vocations, for priests and religious and we think that that is enough. It is not. We also need to respond with our actions, with what we do. Who here has asked their own son or daughter to think about a commitment to life as an ordained minister or religious? Who has asked a friend or colleague, a grandchild have they thought about this type of commitment to priesthood or religious life?

Our church is not perfect, it is not meant to be, so what it will look like in 5 years time: is what and how you live your faith; what it will look like is you and me, together discovering and living in relationship with Jesus. **Living it out today**, inspiring and being witnesses of your faith, to say yes we can and are doing this, and with a little imagining and hope, **together our church will look like us, living the faith.**

Let's live that faith and have the courage to bring it to life, to imagine what it might look like, and have you the courage to live it out!