



Dear parishioners,

Some more reflections and news from your priests during this time of pandemic.

Jesus – the Good Shepherd

(Father Richard writes) This Sunday – the Fourth Sunday of Easter – is known as ‘Good Shepherd Sunday’, since the Gospel of the Good Shepherd is always read today. As I’m sure I have often mentioned before, I grew up in the parish of the Good Shepherd, Downham – I also attended the Good Shepherd Primary School in the same parish. So, this image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd was always something I was very familiar with – perhaps it even subconsciously influenced my decision to try my vocation to the Priesthood!

Later, when I was in Rome at seminary, I was able to go and see the images of the Good Shepherd which are painted on the walls of the catacombs, where the early Christians buried their dead and met to celebrate Mass over the tombs of the martyrs (one such image is depicted above). These ancient frescoes remind us that this image – the Good Shepherd – has been dear to believers since the earliest times, as it speaks so powerfully of Christ’s love and care for us.

The Good Shepherd is also a powerful image of the Priestly ministry. The good Shepherd feeds his flock – as the priest nourishes his people with the Holy Eucharist. The Good Shepherd rescues his flock in danger – and the priest does something similar in administering the Sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick. The Good Shepherd seeks to guide his flock upon the right path (an image of preaching), and he must try to get to know his sheep, accompanying them and putting his life at their service – as the priest must for his people. Lastly, as Jesus reminds us, the truly Good Shepherd will even die for his flock – as Jesus Himself did for us.

This time of ‘lockdown’ is a reminder to us of just how important the Priesthood is in the life of the Church. Without priests, the Church would experience perpetual ‘lockdown’ – no Mass, no Confessions or sacramental life, no celebrations of baptism or weddings – our churches themselves would soon become empty, shuttered buildings, without meaning or purpose. Our being deprived of the normal, sacramental life of the Church at this period should teach us to appreciate it all the more – and to sympathise with those many Catholics around the world who are habitually deprived of priestly ministry and support, whether through lack of vocations or war and persecution.

This Sunday – Good Shepherd Sunday – is also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Let us not pass this Sunday by without setting time aside to pray that God may grant us more priests – inspire more young men to take up this ministry, and give them grace to discern their vocation. When, eventually, the pandemic begins to fade and restrictions on ordinary life are lifted, the Church will face many challenges in the changed world we will all inhabit. To prosper, we will need more priests, ready to give their lives in the service of God’s people - and to follow in the footsteps of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Cardinal Newman's message for May

Our newest English saint, St John Henry (Cardinal) Newman is pictured below. He wrote many works, one of them a beautiful set of meditations for each day of May, the month dedicated to Mary. In his first meditation, he considers why May should have been set aside as 'Mary's Month'. He notes that, in many countries, May is a warm and sunny month, fitting to celebrate the virtues of Mary, the Mother of God. He goes on to note that this is not always the case in England: 'A man may say, "True; but in this climate we have sometimes a bleak, inclement May". This cannot be denied; but still, so much is true that at least it is the month of **promise** and of **hope**. Even though the weather happens to be bad, it is the month that begins and heralds in the summer. We know, for all that may be unpleasant in it, that fine weather is coming sooner or later. "Brightness and beautifulness shall" in the Prophet's words "appear at the end, and shall not lie: if it make delay, wait for it, for it shall surely come, and shall not slack.

May, says Newman, is the month of **promise** and of **hope**. In these days, we continue to feel the pain of those mourning loved ones – the anguish of those still ill – the anxieties so many have for the future. But let us also HOPE – hope that better days will follow soon, for the Church and for the whole world. And as we do so, let us pray, especially in this month of May, to Mary, the Holy Mother of God, and our Mother too.

Spiritual input during lockdown

While we cannot come to church as usual, it is important to nourish our spiritual lives in different ways. There are now many places on the internet where this can be done. One place you might like to look is on the website of St Anthony Communications, which is run by Chris Holden, the brother of Fr Marcus Holden, who was assistant priest here at Holy Ghost a few years ago (and is now parish priest of St Bede's Clapham Park). The site has a good deal of free content, on various aspects of our faith, which can be accessed by following this link: <https://saintant.com/free-content/>

Mrs Mary Killoughery – Rest in peace

We are sad to announce the unexpected death of Mary Killoughery on Tuesday, 21st April 2020, at the age of 87 years. Widow of George, mother of Maura, Eamonn, Paul and Joe and loving grandmother and great grandmother, Mary was a well-known parishioner at Holy Ghost for nearly 50 years, a daily Mass-goer for much of her life and formerly a governor of Holy Ghost School and member of the Parish Finance Committee. Mary trained as a nurse in Ireland and a midwife in London and worked at the old South London Hospital for Women in Clapham South, leaving to set up and run a family construction business alongside George in 1965. There will be a Requiem Mass for Mary on Thursday, May 14th which will be live-streamed from Holy Ghost and a local burial attended by close family members. The timing of Mary's Requiem and further details will be announced shortly. Maura, Eamonn, Paul and Joe are deeply grateful for the many expressions of sympathy they have received. It would be appreciated if Mass offerings can be made, including at Holy Ghost Parish, if desired, rather than flowers.

