

Weekly Message from Fr William for the Fourth Sunday of Easter 2023

Dear People of St Mary's, thank you on behalf of the whole parish to our SVP, for the presentation given last Sunday, and for all you do, putting yourselves at the service of those members of the local community most in need of your care and support.

And can I take the opportunity to thank the whole parish for the work we did together through Lent on the 'liturgical formation' Pope Francis has been calling us to. I believe this is going to be important for the future life of the church. If you missed out on this, then my weekly message for 12 March 2023 will help fill you in a bit – still on the website along with all my weekly messages to you. (You could also read weekly messages 3 July 2022, 31 July 2022 and 21 August 2022 for a three page summary of Francis' teaching on this)

The Fourth Sunday of Easter has been known as Good Shepherd Sunday since the 1970s. This reflects the gospel reading for this Sunday in which Jesus presents himself to us as 'the good shepherd'.

Year A: 'The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock ... the sheep follow because they know his voice.' (John 6)

Year B: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep.' (John 10)

Year C: 'The sheep that belong to my listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me.' (John 10)

In 1964, Pope Paul VI established a World Day of Prayer for Vocations to coincide with Good Shepherd Sunday (then on the Third Sunday of Easter, now on the Fourth Sunday of Easter). Ever since then the church has been called to pray for vocations to the priesthood and to religious life each year especially on this day.

My own vocation to the priesthood and to religious life has been and continues to be a wonderful adventure and one I'm hugely grateful for despite my initial reluctance as a teenager. Every one of the responsibilities entrusted to me over the last 35 or so years of being a monk and a priest I have loved – teacher, housemaster, choirmaster, retreat giver, and now your parish priest. Since firmly putting myself into his hands aged 22, despite that initial reluctance, I have set out to do, will always set out do, whatever I am called upon by him to do, including when my official five year commitment to St Mary's in April 2019 sadly comes to an end next year.

Along with the whole Church, let us pray for vocations especially today on this World Day of Prayer for Vocations, that many men and women will answer the call and put themselves firmly into his hands, into the hands of the Good Shepherd, to do his will and to serve his people as priests and religious.

Happy Easter!



Fourth Sunday of Easter, 30 april 2023