



DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

Bishop John Keenan
Diocesan Centre Cathedral Precincts
Incle Street, Paisley
PA1 1HR
Tel: 0141 847 6130
Fax: 0141 847 6140

Good Shepherd Sunday 2024 Pastoral Letter

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today, the universal Church celebrates *Good Shepherd Sunday*, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood and the Consecrated Life. In his message for Vocations Sunday¹, Pope Francis reflects on our Christian hope. That hope, founded on the presence of the Risen LORD in our hearts and our world, is a welcome message for our world in these times.

The conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, Syria and Africa rumble on without resolution. At home, our own uncertain times continue with daily threats to the sanctity of human life and to the place of our faith in the public square. In our diocesan family, we are discerning with the Holy Spirit the best way to serve our parish communities in the future. At this time, in almost every sphere of human life, it seems difficult to speak of hope with any great conviction.

The hope we proclaim in our faith, however, is not some naïve optimism or *placebo* to make things seem better than they are. Instead, our Christian hope is founded on our confidence that GOD keeps His promises, and none more so than in the promise He made real for us in the Resurrection from the dead of His Son, Our LORD Jesus Christ.

Our priests, deacons and those in consecrated life are witnesses to this hope and to the power GOD's promise has to bring the world new life. Every day in their celebration of the Sacraments, their preaching of

¹ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/vocations/documents/20240421-messaggio-61-gm-vocazioni.html>



GOD's Word, their prayer and their tireless pastoral ministry, they reassure us that the LORD is in our midst and never abandons us.

I want to thank our clergy and religious for the happiness, joy and love they bring to all those to whom they minister, especially those on the margins of our communities. I pray with you that the Spirit will move young people in our parish communities to take up this example and follow our clergy and religious on that same path of hope in the priesthood, the diaconate and the consecrated life.

Good Shepherd Sunday is a day dedicated to imploring Our Heavenly Father for the gift of holy vocations to build up His Kingdom on earth. As Pope Francis points out, however, it is also a good day for recognising all those engaged in a 'hidden' vocations' ministry.² I think of our faithful who regularly pray for vocations, or who offer up their daily Rosary for our priests, or parishes who set aside times of Eucharistic Adoration to pray for an increase in vocations in our diocese and beyond. I commend all your efforts, and I want you to know that I find them a great consolation.

Today and every day, brothers and sisters, we pray that amid these dramatic and disconcerting times, the LORD will continue to raise up apostles of hope from His people, who will serve us with love, generosity and faith.

With every assurance of my closeness and blessings for you and your loved ones.

Yours in Christ,



Bishop John

² *Ibid*