

**PARISH OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL AND ST SIMON STOCK
CARMELITE CHURCH 41 KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET LONDON W8 4BB**

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Priests in the Parish: Fr Thaddeus Ekuma ocd, Fr Matt Blake ocd,
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Fourth Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday) – 25th April 2021

Today Jesus uses the image of a shepherd to depict his nature as our God and the nature of our relationship with him. Even if you have never shepherded before, it suffices to have had an encounter with farmers to understand the extent of the relationship they can have with their flock. This imagery of a shepherd is important in understanding how Our Lord treats us and how we are in turn invited to treat one another.

Jesus underlines three important points about his nature as the Good Shepherd. But before enumerating these points, let us observe how Jesus refers to the flock as “my sheep.” There is a sense of ownership and responsibility for the flock that belongs to him. Hence the most significant nature of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is that He lays down his life for his sheep. The extent of his love for his sheep impels him to stop at nothing to protect them. He leads them, feeds them, nurtures and cares for them, and protects them at all costs.

The depth of love that the Good Shepherd has for his sheep is intricately connected to his deep knowledge of his sheep. As the Psalmist says, “He knows of what we are made.” The Good Shepherd knows his sheep so deeply that he knows each one by name. This is such a profound thing to say. To say that the Shepherd knows each sheep by name means that he knows each of their unique characters, circumstances, difficulties, etc. He knows everything about them – the entire history of each of them. This is why he is able to care for each one of them individually according to their peculiar circumstances. When any one of them strays he knows exactly which one and understands why they might have strayed, and where to search for them. He calls the stray by their name as he scours the forest.

Reciprocally, the sheep know the Good Shepherd. They recognise his voice and are able to distinguish his voice from that of other people who might pose as the Good Shepherd. There are probably other unique signs by which the Shepherd and his flock communicate, for example, the smell of the Good Shepherd. As Pope Francis said, “Pastors should smell like the sheep.” And, the Letter to the Hebrews (2:17) tells us that this is precisely what our Good Shepherd did: “He had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect...” In other words, he had to smell like the sheep in order to make himself recognizable as a part of them.

The final point to mention is that because of these characters of the Good Shepherd, the sheep themselves learn to become shepherds. We often find this happening among a large flock of sheep. Once I was driving I came across a flock of sheep crossing the road. One of them stood at the centre of the road, like a traffic warden, waiting for the whole flock to cross. This is the effect of good shepherding. The qualities of the Good Shepherd inevitably rub off on the sheep.

Now we realize that all this is a metaphor of our relationship with Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Jesus knows each of us by name – he knows our entire history, our individual unique story. Nothing about us escapes him. So he guides each of us along a life path that makes for our unique development. He shepherds us. We in turn must listen to his voice when he seeks us and calls us.

Consequently, this is the day marked out for praying for vocations to the dedicated life of shepherding God's people – to the priesthood and religious life. God continues to seek men and women who will continue the work of shepherd after Christ. Although we all can be shepherds in the manner we have already spoken, priests and religious are shepherds who stand out (a shepherd needs to stand out and be recognizable by the entire sheep). They bear witness in a unique way to the character of Christ our Shepherd. They dedicate their life to the service of the flock in the manner in which Christ did. Do you feel that God is calling you to the priesthood or the religious life? Will you listen to his call?

NOTICES

Relaunch of our Parish Youth Group

We intend to engage more with the young people in our parish and to help them in their faith journey. To this end we are distributing a small questionnaire this weekend to help us ascertain from our young people how best to make faith alive for them and to answer their questions. Please take a questionnaire at the back of the church and give to any young person interested in questions about faith and joining this new group. Anyone from the ages of 18-35 are welcome to join the group.

New (Mobile) Contact Number for the Priory – 0770 8203 595

You can now send a quick text message to the Priory's mobile number if you have a quick question. This number is also on WhatsApp. You can send Mass requests or request for information using this text service.

Year of St Joseph

To mark the year of St. Joseph there will be a talk every first Wednesday of the month beginning in May. The talk will be a reflection on an aspect of the life of St Joseph and his significance as the Patron of the Church and of our families. The talks will be livestreamed on our website and YouTube at 10.00am and repeated at 8.00pm. The first talk will be given on 5th May. All Masses on every first Wednesday of the month will be a votive Mass of St Joseph.

Priest Training Fund

This Sunday is Good Shepherd Sunday and our special collection will support the Priest Training Fund. This fund pays for the priestly formation of men for the Catholic priesthood. There are currently 42 men studying at Allen Hall seminary, 18 of whom are for our own Diocese, and two men are studying in Rome, also for our Diocese. Last year two men who studied at Allen Hall and one who studied in Rome ordained to the priesthood to serve as our future priests. This fund also supports the ongoing enrichment and formation of our ordained priests. Your generous donation helps ensure we can support these men who are called to be like Christ the Good Shepherd. Donation leaflets are available at the back of the church. Please take one home, read the information, and bring it back next weekend with your donation. Please continue to pray for vocations and for our priests. You can donate online anytime at www.rcdow.org.uk/donations

Collections Last Sunday

Offering	£1763
Gift Aid Envelopes	£223

Thank you for your generosity

Fr. Thaddeus OCD