

St Peter's and St Philip's Newsletter

POPE'S INTENTIONS FOR APRIL
That those suffering from
addiction may be helped
and accompanied.

16, Green Lane, Hazel Grove, SK7 4EA Phone 0161 483 3476 Fax 419 9592
www.stpeterscatholic.church www.churchservices.tv/stockport
Email admin@stpetershazelgrove.org.uk
Fr. Peter Sharrocks petersharrocks@stpetershazelgrove.org.uk



Mother of God
Local
Missionary
Area
in Stockport

Offertory Gifts Thank you for your generous donations last week which amounted to £511-85 plus £600 by Standing Orders and a number of envelopes for the Easter Offerings. Thank you to those who are putting their Offertory envelopes through the door and who have done the on line giving..
THE NEW SET OF OFFERTORY ENVELOPES FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW FINANCIAL YEAR IN APRIL ARE AVAILABLE IN THE PORCH. THEY ARE CLEARLY MARKED WITH YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS AND THEY WILL STILL BE THERE WHEN WE GET BACK TO 'NORMAL'!

DURING THE PRESENT EMERGENCY WE STILL HAVE BILLS TO PAY!! Please continue to put your offerings in an envelope and save them until we are 'back to normal' or you can post them through the presbytery door. If you wish you can send an offering by cheque payable to St Peters Hazel Grove or do a direct transfer to

St Peters Hazel Grove at Lloyds Bank 30 15 52 54607668 or set up a Standing Order or for St Philip's go to **St Philips Offerton 30 15 52 54674660**

See also the note overleaf about on line giving via a new website

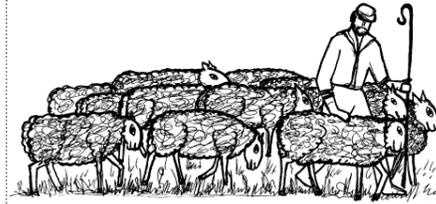
GIFT AID DONORS - will any donors who no longer pay Income Tax please notify the Parish office to ensure the accuracy of this years claim. Date of last payment will assist. Anyone who wishes to join the scheme please contact Hughie 07977414884 or email k13rey@sky.com

CAFOD Collection - £10

Cleaning - There is no Church cleaning until further notice

Callers - Could we ask that callers to the Presbytery please use the front door and also if you are putting an envelope through the letter box there is no need to ring the bell.

References - WE REMIND ANYBODY WHO IS PUTTING FR PETER DOWN AS REFEREE TO CONTACT HIM IN PERSON, NOT BY PHONE OR EMAIL. THIS



THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST READING:
Acts 2:14,36-41;

PSALM: 22:

**The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall
want.**

SECOND READING:
1 Peter 2:20-25

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

**Alleluia, Alleluia!
I am the good shepherd,
say the Lord; I know my
own sheep and my own
know me
Alleluia**

GOSPEL READING:
John 10:1-10

**The Sacrament of
Reconciliation**
will be celebrated by
appointment and subject
to social distancing

YOU ARE ALL WELCOME TO OUR PARISH COMMUNITIES

During the present emergency the churches have to remain closed. All Masses, Rosaries and Exposition from St Peters are being streamed live.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available by appointment and is subject to social distancing.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - Year A

Divine Office Psalter Week 4

ALL SERVICES WILL ONLY BE AVAILABLE ON THE LIVE STREAM

Each evening the Rosary will be said at 7 00 p.m, join in on line

www.churchservices.tv/stockport

Sunday 3rd May 2020 FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

10.00 am People of the Parish

Readings: Acts 2:14, 36-41; Psalm 22; 1 Peter 2:20-25; John 10:1-10.

DAY OF SPECIAL PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Monday 4th May 2020 The ENGLISH MARTYRS

12 Noon Josie Cribbin

Readings: Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 30; Matthew 10:17-20

Tuesday 5th May 2020

12 Noon Peggy Saunders

Readings: Acts 11: 19-26; Psalm 86; John 10:22-30

A Private funeral service for Peggy Saunders this afternoon

Wednesday 6th May 2020

12 Noon For Disadvantaged Children

Readings: Acts 12:24-13:5 Psalm 66; John 12:44-50.

Thursday 7th May 2020

12 Noon Dora Rayson (Sick)

Readings: Acts 13:13-25; Psalm 88; John 13:16-20

Friday 8th May 2020

12 noon In Thanksgiving

Readings: Acts 13:26-33; Psalm 2 John 14:1-6

Saturday 9th May 2020

11 00-11 45 a.m. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

12 noon Carmel Kimpton

Readings: Acts 13:44-52; Psalm 97; John 14:7-14

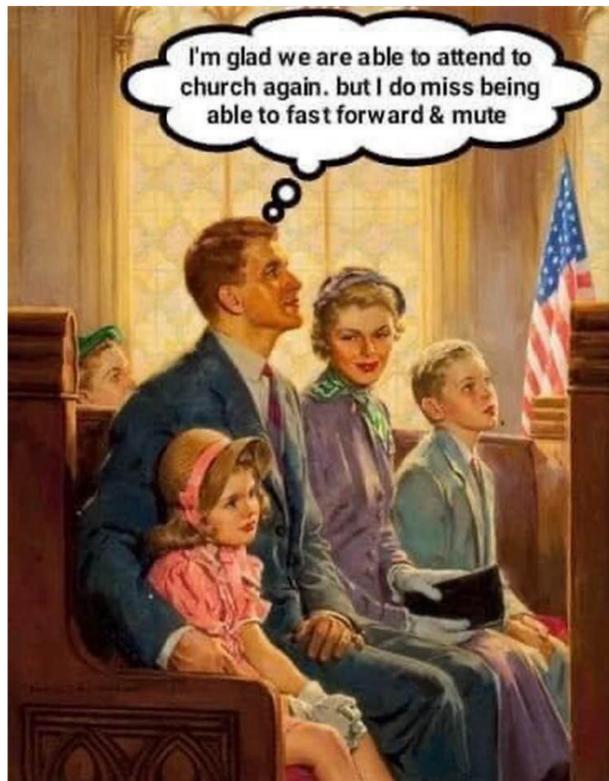
Sunday 10th May 2020 FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

10.00 am People of the Parish

Readings: Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 32; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12.

ROSARY AT 7 00 p.m. Each evening streamed live churchservices.tv.stockport

**PLEASE KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR NEIGHBOURS IN CASE THEY NEED
HELP AT THIS TIME**



From Fr Peter.

Well given that we are in 'lockdown' there still seems to be a lot going on thanks to the various means of communication on the internet. This newsletter is getting bigger each week as we try to keep in touch. This week there are two important messages from the Holy Father, one from the Archbishops of England and Wales and one from Cafod as well as the usual happenings virtual or otherwise. If plans go smoothly you should also hear some different voices proclaiming the readings and bidding prayers at Sunday Mass, thanks to the wonders of information technology and those who can work it.. We had a good Zoom meeting of the Pastoral team last Monday evening looking at what is going on at the moment and what will need to be looked at when things might be getting back to what is lovingly called 'normal'. But it could be some time yet, we shall see

There are lots of cartoons and funny films buzzing around on the internet and I couldn't resist sharing this one with you. I am sure that it will not apply to any of you when we do get back in church. It won't will it?! In the mean time

**Stay well, stay at home, keep safe,
wash your hands!!** Fr Peter

LIVE ON THE INTERNET

To access our Masses go to www.churchservices.tv/stockport

PLEASE NOTE THAT ST PETER'S CHURCH AND SOME OF THE GROUNDS ARE MONITORED BY CCTV CAMERAS AND LIVE STREAMING CAMERAS 24/7

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The Parish of St. Peter's Hazel Grove sometimes collects personal information about parishioners. All personal information is collected and stored in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. This is retained only as necessary and used by the Parish/Diocese for the benefit of the Parish and for legitimate reasons such as administrative and religious purposes. You can read our full privacy notice at

The Diocese of Shrewsbury is a Registered Charity No 234025



CORONAVIRUS

There is a group of volunteers from the parish who will be happy to help those who are unable to get out to shop or just want a chat over the phone. If you need such help then get in touch via our parish phone 0161 483 3476 or email and leave a message and we shall get back to you.

Your prayers are asked for

The sick - remembering, all the sick in the parish, in our hospitals and nursing homes. We also remember those who are housebound and are unable to come to Mass. We remember especially young people who are sick. Let us also keep in our prayers all those who have care of the sick and the dying at this time often putting their own lives at risk in the process.

Lately Dead: Alexander Murphy, Peggy Saunders and James Flynn

Anniversaries that occur around this time: Bishop Joseph Gray, Moira Drain, Ken Lupton, Helga Bartley, Sheila Durdey, Mary Jackson, May McCormack, William Gingell, Cecilia Hillier and Josephine Sherry.

Prayer Intentions - We have a team of 'prayer warriors' who will pray for your intentions at this time, send your intentions to the parish office and they will be forwarded. You can also light a 'virtual' candle on the parish website.

To prepare for this prayer, spend a few moments asking the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to hear this Word being spoken to you today.

Fourth Sunday of Easter (Year A)

John 10:1-10

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them. So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'

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1. Spend some time quietly reading and rereading the passage, noting the words/phrases that draw your attention.
2. Imagine yourself there, listening to Jesus. Notice your thoughts, feeling...
3. Allow yourself to hear Jesus calling you by name and saying 'I have come that YOU may have life, and have it to the full.' Take time to be with Jesus, to respond...

For Conversation:

How your parish community discerns the Shepherd's voice amongst the many differing voices.



ALPHA

We're in unprecedented times but Alpha doesn't have to stop. Through the powers of modern technology, Alpha will be continuing on line after Easter, streaming the videos through an online conference service called zoom including small group discussion - you'll just have to provide your own drinks and food! To register your interest email mckay7897@hotmail.com

MARRIAGE COURSE ONLINE

This is a unique moment in time where we find ourselves in a season where strength in relationships is needed more than ever. This applies particularly to marriage. We are looking to offer the marriage course online in the coming weeks, a fantastic resource for strengthening marriages. See link below.

<https://alphainternational.cmail20.com/t/j-l-qzjin-tktskhs-y/>

There is no cost involved and the film series will be shown in webinar mode ensuring complete privacy for couples. Please register your interest by emailing aurasmall92@outlook.com

SCRUBS FOR THE NHS

A Stockport volunteer sewing army banded together to provide urgently needed scrubs and PPE to the local primary care health community in the midst of Covid-19. We are here one stitch at a time - to protect our NHS heroes risking their lives daily in order to protect us.

If you can sew and would like to help out please sign up on the FaceBook page 'For the love of Scrubs - Stockport Cheshire' alternatively there is a desperate need for fabric, if you can donate cotton/polycotton fabric, (old bed linen) any colour or pattern except white or cream, elastic for the waistbands, tape to be used as drawstrings, or thread it would all be most welcome. The donations can be made via the FaceBook page or if you aren't on Facebook call Una Devlin on **07894904930**

A WEEK OF GUIDED PRAYER -still on the calendar!

Earlier in the year a week of Guided Prayer was written in to the Parish Calendar to start the very last day of May. Then the virus invasion that swept into all our lives, changing them beyond recognition, led us to assume the week would have to be postponed for another time. However the genius of modern technology means that need not be the case. **We can and will still have our week of Guided prayer from 31st May – 6th June but it will be a Virtual week available on line**

A week of accompanied prayer is an ideal way of drawing closer to God in the midst of daily living, particularly in our present circumstances, and will be open to all who have access to the internet. Each day participants set aside a half hour prayer period based on Scripture and, in addition, receive face to face spiritual support /guidance from a member of the prayer team each day via Zoom or Skype or .any other communication app that is readily available

Participants make their prayer exercise at home and but also make a timed internet appointment with their assigned prayer companion for 30 minutes Monday to Friday inclusive. On the opening Sunday and the closing Saturday there will hopefully be a group session via Zoom

If you are interested in availing of this personal retreat on line please send an email clearly headed Directed Prayer week to: michaeldomalley@sky.com Please include your name, your phone number; and your email address and also, very importantly, whether you will be using Facetime; Skype or Zoom to communicate with your prayer companion.

Please do not delay in making your decision as it is important to know the number for which plans need to be made.

St Peter's Book Club in lockdown

In these unprecedented times we are hoping that more people within the parish will be looking to pick up a good book, so please find a little list that will hopefully keep you going - *Conversations with Friends* by Sally Rooney, *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* by Christy Lefteri, *The Book Thief* by Markus Lefteri, *Mud Larking* by Lara Maikelm, *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammed, *The Woman in the Window* by AJ Finn, *Firefly* by Henry Porter, *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon, *The Winter Soldier* by Daniel Mason, *The Binding* by Bridget Collins, *The Huntress* by Kate Quinn and *The Wolf and the Watchman* by Niklas Natt och Dag.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE DIOCESE AND COMMUNITY

In his most recent letter to the priests of the diocese, the Bishop has cancelled his timetable of Visitations and Confirmations for the summer which means the planned visitation at St Philip's in June and Confirmation in July for our Local Area will not take place as scheduled. We will have to wait and see how the lockdown is revised in the weeks and months that lie ahead before making any plans. This is the same for First Confessions and Communions.

FOODBANK AT ST PHILIP'S

The Foodbank at St. Philips is still operating each Thursday and, as you can imagine, is very busy. Thanks to all our parishioners who are helping with their time or gifts of food. Supplies are needed but a request has gone out to stick to tea, coffee or cans of soup, tomatoes, vegetables, fruit, meat, fish etc. but no treats or chocolates or nappies as we have plenty of these. Donations can be put in the containers at Asda or Sainsburys in Hazel Grove or taken directly to the Baptist Church, opposite Hazel Grove station.

IF YOU HAVE DONATIONS FOR THE FOOD BANK PLEASE WOULD YOU TAKE THEM DIRECTLY TO HAZEL GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH OPEN ON MONDAYS 12 30-14 30, WEDNESDAYS 10 30—12 30 AND FRIDAYS 11 30—14 30. PLEASE DO NOT BRING THEM TO ST PETERS AT THE MOMENT

ONLINE GIVING TO THE PARISH

For those Parishioners who normally give in the collection at Mass and wish to help the Parish at this time, an online donation page to allow you to donate to the Parish has been added to the Parish website. **Please be aware that a minimum donation of £5 is requested if giving in this way. The link for each of our two parishes is shown below**

The page can also be used to set up a regular monthly donation, and you can also Gift Aid your donation to help the Parish further. If you want to Gift Aid your donation, please tick the box shown on the screen even if you have previously completed a Gift Aid Declaration form in favour of the Parish for regular giving made by Offertory Envelope or Standing Order. The page can be found at:

For St Peters <https://investmycommunity.com/not-logged-donator/page/stpeterdioceseofshrewsbury2122>

For St Philip's use <https://investmycommunity.com/not-logged-donator/page/StPhilipOffertonDioceseofShrewsbury2161>

Thank you for your support.

LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE FAITHFUL FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The month of May is approaching, a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this "family" aspect, also from a spiritual point of view.

For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the Rosary at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and [it is easy also on the internet](#) to find good models of prayers to follow.

I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the Rosary, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you. I include them with this letter so that they are available to everyone.

Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 25 April 2020

Feast of Saint Mark the Evangelist

Pope Francis

First Prayer

O Mary,
You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross,
were united with Jesus' suffering,
and persevered in your faith.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.
For he took upon himself our suffering,
and burdened himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection.
Amen.

*We fly to your protection,
O Holy Mother of God;
Do not despise our petitions
in our necessities,
but deliver us always
from every danger,
O Glorious and Blessed Virgin*

"Protectress of the Roman people",
you know our needs,
and we know that you will provide,
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this time of trial.

Second Prayer

We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God".

In the present tragic situation, when the whole world is prey to suffering and anxiety, we fly to you, Mother of God and our Mother, and seek refuge under your protection.

Virgin Mary, turn your merciful eyes towards us amid this coronavirus pandemic. Comfort those who are distraught and mourn their loved ones who have died, and at times are buried in a way that grieves them deeply. Be close to those who are concerned for their loved ones who are sick and who, in order to prevent the spread of the disease, cannot be close to them. Fill with hope those who are troubled by the uncertainty of the future and the consequences for the economy and employment.

Mother of God and our Mother, pray for us to God, the Father of mercies, that this great suffering may end and that hope and peace may dawn anew. Plead with your divine Son, as you did at Cana, so that the families of the sick and the victims be comforted, and their hearts be opened to confidence and trust.



Protect those doctors, nurses, health workers and volunteers who are on the frontline of this emergency, and are risking their lives to save others. Support their heroic effort and grant them strength, generosity and continued health.

Be close to those who assist the sick night and day, and to priests who, in their pastoral concern and fidelity to the Gospel, are trying to help and support everyone.

Blessed Virgin, illumine the minds of men and women engaged in scientific research, that they may find effective solutions to overcome this virus.

Support national leaders, that with wisdom, solicitude and generosity they may come to the aid of those lacking the basic necessities of life and may devise social and economic solutions inspired by farsightedness and solidarity.

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

Beloved Mother, help us realize that we are all members of one great family and to recognize the bond that unites us, so that, in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity, we can help to alleviate countless situations of poverty and need. Make us strong in faith, persevering in service, constant in prayer.

Mary, Consolation of the afflicted, embrace all your children in distress and pray that God will stretch out his all-powerful hand and free us from this terrible pandemic, so that life can serenely resume its normal course.

To you, who shine on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope, do we entrust ourselves, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.

VIRTUAL TEAS AND COFFEES SUNDAY AT 11 AM

If you would like to receive the link to join the Zoom Sunday Morning Virtual Teas and Coffees and haven't already registered your email address on the [stpetershelpers](#) website, then please click on the link below and register your email address.

Register here;- <https://forms.gle/9oRc4QRs3JJnJ9Yu9>

If you know people who would like to join the teas and coffees gathering on a Sunday please let them know and ask them to register as well. You can register their email for them, so long as you have their consent to do so.

The Zoom link for Sunday's gathering will be then be sent out once you've registered.

We've made some progress in helping people with technology but if anyone is still struggling, do let us know

Hope to see you on Sunday,

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM CAFOD

CAFOD, our Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, launched its coronavirus emergency appeal on 30 April. Coronavirus (Covid-19) has now spread worldwide, with confirmed cases in many countries where CAFOD works. The effects of coronavirus on developing countries are likely to be devastating. Many countries have very weak healthcare systems and will not be able to cope. Families without enough to eat and without access to clean water, possibly living with other diseases, will be particularly vulnerable to coronavirus. It is not just a public health emergency. Many of the world's most vulnerable people will lose their jobs and be unable to support their families. The poorest and most marginalised communities, working hard to transform their lives, will be pushed further into poverty. CAFOD is adapting its programmes to help manage the risk of coronavirus in communities and working with local Church aid agencies on the frontline of this crisis. They are already working to get food to where it is needed most; to improve hygiene, handwashing and sanitation in communities and households; producing radio messages, posters and leaflets in local languages on risks and prevention; and training community volunteers to carry out awareness campaigns. In order to continue protecting and improving the lives of those in poor communities, your prayers and gifts are needed now more than ever. While we are not able to hold collections in our church, you can donate at cafod.org.uk/coronavirusappeal, or put money in an envelope marked **CAFOD** through the presbytery door with your offertory envelope

A People who Hope in Christ
**A Message from the Metropolitan Archbishops
of the Catholic Church in England and Wales**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The radiance of the risen Lord shines upon us. At a time when so many shadows are cast into our lives, and upon our world, the light of the resurrection shines forever to renew and restore our hope. In the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis: *'In the midst of isolation when we are suffering from a lack of tenderness and chances to meet up, and we experience the loss of so many things, let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: he is risen and is living by our side.'* (27 March 2020)

The impact of Covid-19, both nationally and internationally, has been immense. So much of what we take for granted has changed. Our health and physical interaction, our capacity to travel and gather, have all been affected. There is uncertainty in our future, especially with work and the country's economy. As we know, very sadly, large numbers of people have died because of the coronavirus, and others have been or remain seriously ill. Keyworkers, not least in the National Health Service and care sectors, are serving selflessly to sustain the life of our nation. Our hearts and prayers go out to everyone who is suffering because of Covid-19, and to all those battling to overcome its effects. May those who have died rest in peace and those who are bereaved find comfort.

When the Prime Minister announced the lockdown, this included places of worship and therefore Catholic churches. These measures were put in place to stem the general transmission of the virus. It is right that the Catholic community fulfils its role in contributing to the preservation of life and the common good of society. This must continue until the restrictions applied by the Government are lifted. None of us would want to be in the situation in which we find ourselves. While the live-streaming of the Mass and other devotions is playing an important part in maintaining the life of faith, there is no substitute for Catholics being able to physically attend and participate in the celebration of the Mass and the other sacraments. Our faith is expressed powerfully and beautifully though 'seeing, touching, and tasting.' We know that every bishop and every priest recognises the pain of Catholics who, at present, cannot pray in church or receive the sacraments. This weighs heavily on our hearts. We are deeply moved by the Eucharistic yearning expressed by so many members of the faithful. We thank you sincerely for your love for the Lord Jesus, present in the sacraments and supremely so in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The bishops and priests of every diocese are remembering you and your loved ones at Mass each day in our churches as we pray 'in hope of health and wellbeing.' We thank our priests for this faithfulness to their calling.

As the Government's restrictions are relaxed step by step, we look forward to opening our churches and resuming our liturgical, spiritual, catechetical and pastoral life step by step. This will also be of service to those beyond the Catholic Church who depend on our charitable activity and outreach through which much goodness is shared by so many volunteers from our communities.

None of us knows, as yet, how or when the lockdown will end. There is likely to be a phased return to travelling and gathering. As a church, we are now planning for this time and our discussions with the statutory public health agencies and Government representatives are ongoing. Together with Catholics across England and Wales we desire the opening of our churches and access to the sacraments. Until then, we are continuing to pray and prepare.

We want to acknowledge with gratitude the service of our fellow bishops and priests, our deacons and religious, our families and lay faithful, together with all our parish and school communities, for the wonderful ways the life of the faith is being nourished at this time, especially in the home. We also pay tribute to the Catholic organisations and networks that are working to support the vulnerable and needy.

On that first Easter day, the disciples were in lockdown and the doors were closed. In their isolation the Lord Jesus came among them and said 'Peace be with you.' May the peace of the risen Lord reign in our hearts and homes as we look forward to the day we can enter church again and gather around the altar to offer together the Sacrifice of Praise.

We unite in asking the intercession of Our Blessed Lady and assure you of our prayers and blessing

Yours devotedly in Christ,

- ✠ Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster
- ✠ Malcolm McMahon OP, Archbishop of Liverpool
- ✠ Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham
 - ✠ George Stack, Archbishop of Cardiff
 - ✠ John Wilson, Archbishop of Southwark

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE 2020 WORLD DAY OF VOCATIONS**

(3 May 2020)

Words of Vocation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On 4 August last year, the 160th anniversary of the death of the Curé of Ars, [I chose to write a letter to all those priests](#) who daily devote their lives to the service of God's people in response to the Lord's call.

On that occasion, I chose four key words – *pain, gratitude, encouragement* and *praise* – as a way of thanking priests and supporting their ministry. I believe that today, on this 57th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, those words can be addressed to the whole people of God, against the backdrop of the Gospel passage that recounts for us the remarkable experience of Jesus and Peter during a stormy night on the Sea of Galilee (cf. *Mt* 14:22-33).

After the multiplication of the loaves, which had astonished the crowds, Jesus told his disciples to get into the boat and precede him to the other shore, while he took leave of the people. The image of the disciples crossing the lake can evoke our own life's journey. Indeed, the boat of our lives slowly advances, restlessly looking for a safe haven and prepared to face the perils and promises of the sea, yet at the same time trusting that the helmsman will ultimately keep us on the right course. At times, though, the boat can drift off course, misled by mirages, not the lighthouse that leads it home, and be tossed by the tempests of difficulty, doubt and fear.

Something similar takes place in the hearts of those who, called to follow the Teacher of Nazareth, have to undertake a crossing and abandon their own security to become the Lord's disciples. The risk involved is real: the night falls, the headwinds howl, the boat is tossed by the waves, and fear of failure, of not being up to the call, can threaten to overwhelm them.

The Gospel, however, tells us that in the midst of this challenging journey we are not alone. Like the first ray of dawn in the heart of the night, the Lord comes walking on the troubled waters to join the disciples; he invites Peter to come to him on the waves, saves him when he sees him sinking and, once in the boat, makes the winds die down.

The first word of vocation, then, is *gratitude*. Taking the right course is not something we do on our own, nor does it depend solely on the road we choose to travel. How we find fulfilment in life is more than a decision we make as isolated individuals; above all else, it is a response to a call from on high. The Lord points out our destination on the opposite shore and he grants us the courage to board the boat. In calling us, he becomes our helmsman; he accompanies and guides us; he prevents us from running aground on the shoals of indecision and even enables us to walk on surging waters.

Every vocation is born of that gaze of love with which the Lord came to meet us, perhaps even at a time when our boat was being battered by the storm. "Vocation, more than our own choice, is a response to the Lord's unmerited call" ([Letter to Priests](#), 4 August 2019). We will succeed in discovering and embracing our vocation once we open our hearts in gratitude and perceive the passage of God in our lives.

When the disciples see Jesus walking towards them on the sea, they first think that he is a ghost and are filled with fear. Jesus immediately reassures them with words that should constantly accompany our lives and our vocational journey: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear" (Mt 14:27). This, then, is the second word I wish to offer you: *encouragement*.

What frequently hinders our journey, our growth, our choosing the road the Lord is marking out for us, are certain "ghosts" that trouble our hearts. When we are called to leave safe shores and embrace a state of life – like marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life – our first reaction is often from the "ghost of disbelief". Surely, this vocation is not for me! Can this really be the right path? Is the Lord really asking me to do this?

Those thoughts can keep growing – justifications and calculations that sap our determination and leave us hesitant and powerless on the shore where we started. We think we might be wrong, not up to the challenge, or simply glimpsing a ghost to be exorcized.

The Lord knows that a fundamental life choice – like marriage or special consecration to his service – calls for *courage*. He knows the questions, doubts and difficulties that toss the boat of our heart, and so he reassures us: "Take heart, it is I; have no fear!" We know in faith that he is present and comes to meet us, that he is ever at our side even amid stormy seas. This knowledge sets us free from that lethargy which I have called "sweet sorrow" (*Letter to Priests*, 4 August 2019), the interior discouragement that hold us back from experiencing the beauty of our vocation.

In the *Letter to Priests*, I also spoke about pain, but here I would like to translate the word differently, as *fatigue*. Every vocation brings with it a responsibility. The Lord calls us because he wants to enable us, like Peter, to "walk on water", in other words, to take charge of our lives and place them at the service of the Gospel, in the concrete and everyday ways that he shows us, and specifically in the different forms of lay, priestly and consecrated vocation. Yet, like Saint Peter, our desire and enthusiasm coexist with our failings and fears.

If we let ourselves be daunted by the responsibilities that await us – whether in married life or priestly ministry – or by the hardships in store for us, then we will soon turn away from the gaze of Jesus and, like Peter, we will begin to sink. On the other hand, despite our frailty and poverty, faith enables us to walk towards the Risen Lord and to weather every storm. Whenever fatigue or fear make us start to sink, Jesus holds out his hand to us. He gives us the enthusiasm we need to live our vocation with joy and fervour.

When Jesus at last boards the boat, the winds die down and the waves are calmed. Here we have a beautiful image of what the Lord can do at times of turbulence and tempest in our lives. He stills those winds, so that the forces of evil, fear and resignation no longer have power over us.

As we live out our specific vocation, those headwinds can wear us down. Here I think of all those who have important responsibilities in civil society, spouses whom I like to refer to – not without reason – as "courageous", and in a particular way those who have embraced the consecrated life or the priesthood. I am conscious of your hard work, the sense of isolation that can at times weigh upon your hearts, the risk of falling into a rut that can gradually make the ardent flame of our vocation die down, the burden of the uncertainty and insecurity of the times, and worry about the future. Take heart, do not be afraid! Jesus is at our side, and if we acknowledge him as the one Lord of our lives, he will stretch out his hand, take hold of us and save us.

Even amid the storm-tossed waters, then, our lives become open to *praise*. This is the last of our vocation words, and it is an invitation to cultivate the interior disposition of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Grateful that Lord gazed upon her, faithful amid fear and turmoil, she courageously embraced her vocation and made of her life an eternal song of praise to the Lord.

Dear friends, on this day in particular, but also in the ordinary pastoral life of our communities, I ask the Church to continue to promote vocations. May she touch the hearts of the faithful and enable each of them to discover with gratitude God's call in their lives, to find courage to say "yes" to God, to overcome all weariness through faith in Christ, and to make of their lives a song of praise for God, for their brothers and sisters, and for the whole world. May the Virgin Mary accompany us and intercede for us.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 8 March 2020, the Second Sunday of Lent

Franciscus



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