



# St Mary's, Lanark

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**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020:** Fourth Sunday of Easter Year A - Good Shepherd Sunday

Today is World Day of Prayer for Vocations

**Mass Times - There are currently no masses at St Mary's Church, due to the Coronavirus pandemic.**

## **A Prayer for Priests:**

Lord Jesus, you have chosen your priests from among us and sent them out to proclaim your word and to act in your name. For so great a gift to your Church, we give you praise and thanksgiving.

**We ask you** to fill them with the fire of your love, that their ministry may reveal your presence in the Church. Since they are earthen vessels, we pray that your power shine out through their weakness.

**In their afflictions** let them never be crushed; in their doubts never despair; in temptation never be destroyed; in persecution never abandoned. Inspire them through prayer to live each day the mystery of your dying and rising.

**In times of weakness** send them your Spirit, and help them to praise your heavenly Father and pray for poor sinners. By the same Holy Spirit put your words on their lips and your love in their hearts, to bring good news to the poor and healing to the broken-hearted.

**And may the gift of Mary** your mother, to the disciple whom you loved, be your gift to every priest. Grant that she who formed you in her human image may, by the intercession, help to form them in your Divine Image by the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

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

These words of Pope Francis on vocations reflects on all our vocations; married, single, religious or priestly. His homily is on the Gospel of the calming of the storm: "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. (full text Vatican Website)



**Month of May is the Month of Mary:** the Church honours Our Lady in this month of May, perhaps we might rediscover the treasure and power of the rosary as a family prayer.

## **Anniversaries & Recent Deaths**

*Please remember in your prayers the recently deceased: Margaret Sheila Kelly & Christopher Doolan.*

***Fr. Doyle's Reflection for Sunday*** - There are certain moments in life that you will never forget, that will forever remain emblazoned on your memory. One such occasion for me, which I will most certainly never forget, was closing and locking of the doors of the Church for the last time. The idea of locking the church doors is so alien and foreign to us it seems almost blasphemous and sacrilegious. I remember clearly closing and locking the doors and walking in to a dark and silent church feeling crushed and brokenhearted and asking God's guidance and protection in the difficult days and weeks that would lie ahead.

The final public mass we celebrated was on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, the feast of St Joseph, General Absolution was given at the mass and the last hymn we sang was Dear St Joseph with its haunting refrain "Teach, oh teach, us how to die," a mass never to be forgotten or hopefully repeated.

None of us like closed doors, to have a door closed in your face is terrible insult. And at this time so many doors are locked and closed shops, schools, pubs, restaurants, libraries and leisure centres. In this time of lockdown we also live with closed doors in our own homes cutting us off from the world.

Amidst all these closed doors and locked gates Jesus speaks of himself in this Sunday's Gospel as the Gate of the Sheepfold.

In St John's Gospel the "I am" statements of Jesus have a special meaning and poignancy, pointing to the divine nature of Christ who will also say "I am the Resurrection and the Life... I am Bread of Life."

So when Jesus says I am the Gate he points to what is central to his work of salvation. For he is the one who opens the gates of heaven for us, who through the grace of baptism open to us our own special place in his sheepfold, the church.

Jesus opens every door and gate for us, leading us forward on the road of life. He is the one who never closes the way of life to us or because of our sins and weakness slams the door on us. At every juncture and moment of our lives he opens the way of salvation for us, overcomes every obstacle, and even when we delay or lose our way he holds open the door to welcome our return.

This Sunday we also pray for vocations, remembering especially vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Please keep this important petition in your prayers. But each of us, by the grace of our baptism has a vocation, a calling from God that only we can fulfill. Christ calls each one of us to be his disciples in the world. To bear witness to him by the love and care we show to one another.

For us forced behind closed doors in the present shutdown it may appear that we have little opportunity to be Christ's witness. But in all the frustrations and testing we may experience at home, perhaps here, we have the greatest opportunity to show our calling to be like Christ by our patience, tolerance and forbearance with each other. There is no doubt these may be testing times but let us remember that charity and love begins at home.

God bless and please be assured of my prayers. Fr. Doyle

### **Keeping In Touch**

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### ***Easter's empty tomb is a call to conversion.***

By this tomb, we should know for certain that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, as Peter preaches in today's First Reading.

He is the "Lord," the divine Son that David foresaw at God's right hand And He is the Messiah that God had promised to shepherd the scattered flock of the house of Israel.

As we hear in today's Gospel, Jesus is that Good Shepherd, sent to a people who were like sheep without a shepherd He calls not only to the children of Israel, but to all those far off from Him—to whomever the Lord wishes to hear His voice.

The call of the Good Shepherd leads to the restful waters of Baptism, to the anointing oil of Confirmation, and to the table and overflowing cup of the Eucharist, as we sing in today's Psalm.

Again on this Sunday in Easter, we hear His voice calling us His own. He should awaken in us the response of those who heard Peter's preaching. "What are we to do?" they cried.

We have been baptized. But each of us goes astray like sheep, as we hear in today's Epistle. We still need daily to repent, to seek forgiveness of our sins, to separate ourselves further from this corrupt generation.

We are called to follow in the footsteps of the Shepherd of our souls. By His suffering He bore our sins in His body to free us from sin. But His suffering is also an example for us. From Him we should learn patience in our afflictions, to hand ourselves over to the will of God.

Jesus has gone ahead, driven us through the dark valley of evil and death. His Cross has become the narrow gate through which we must pass to reach His empty tomb—the verdant pastures of life abundant.