

Vocations Sunday

Readings at Mass: Sunday 12th May 2019

4th Sunday of Easter

First reading: Acts 13:14,43-52

Paul and Barnabas carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the Sabbath and took their seats.

When the meeting broke up many Jews and devout converts joined Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them.

The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly. 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said:

I have made you a light for the nations,
so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'

It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.

But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Second reading: Apocalypse 7:9,14-17

I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. One of the elders said, 'These are the people who have been through the great persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

Gospel: John 10:27-30

Jesus said:

'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice;
I know them and they follow me.
I give them eternal life;
they will never be lost
and no one will ever steal them from me.
The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone,
and no one can steal from the Father.
The Father and I are one.'

Vocations Sunday

Homily Notes: Sunday 12th May 2019

How can we be an Emmaus Church for young people who are looking to find their way in the world? Last year's Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment reminded us that we are each called to holiness, lived out through our vocations. The inspiration for the final document is drawn from the story of the disciples on road to Emmaus, a wonderfully human story of accompaniment in loss, revelation of hope, and joy in finding their call.

This Vocations or Good Shepherd Sunday there is a twofold invitation and challenge for us as the people of God. Firstly, from the findings of the Synod it is clear the world over, "young people have asked for an authentic, luminous, transparent and joyful Church: only a Church of saints can live up to these demands! Many of them have left the Church because they have not found holiness there, but rather mediocrity, arrogance, division, and corruption" (*No 166 published in America 27/10/18*).

This resonates with Pope Francis' vision of an authentic Church, meeting the needs of the world, especially young people. In a time when opinion has supplanted fact, there is a need for people to preach and witness to truth. As a part of the family of God we need to exemplify the values of our faith, but in humility and compassion. It is interesting to note in a recent talk with young people in discernment for the priesthood and religious life, none had proposed themselves as candidates. They believed themselves to be not good enough. In each case, it was only after the encouragement of fellow parishioners and friends that they were able to take that first crucial step. We are called to foster and raise up such men and women with the capacity to be good shepherds not just now, but anticipating the needs of our Church into the future.

Secondly, for our discerners now is the time we need your vision and joy, your faith and hope. It is not difficult to see that as a Church we have had something of a Passion experience in recent years. It is understandable that, like the two disciples leaving Jerusalem, people have left with a feeling of loss and confusion. However, we have a God who walks with you, who accompanies you on the way, and who challenges you to see the movement of the Spirit in our world. We pray that through the experience of the Sacraments, times of prayer, the gift of the Church, and the beauty of the world, you will encounter God calling you beyond your greatest expectations. We pray that your hearts will be on fire through the celebration of our faith, the sharing of hope, and the living out the example of Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, there is a lot of work for love to do.

Fr Alan Neville MSC

