

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
8th May 2022 - 4th Sunday of Easter – Vocations Sunday

Readings (Yr C): 1st: Acts 13:14. 43-52. Psalm: 99. 2nd: Apocalypse 7:9. 14-17. Gospel: John 10:27-30.

Many of you will remember the HMV logo of the little dog listening to the gramophone. His Masters Voice. Prompts us today to ask whose voice do we listen to, to follow? Whose standards do we seek to emulate? Loud voices shout at us constantly from many sources ... peer pressure, political slogans, pop culture, endless advertising, all the technology we use to communicate; radio.TV etc.

Writers about the Holy Land have always been intrigued by the various calls and whistles that shepherds use and the unfailing response of sheep to them. Several flocks may be intermingled overnight in the same shelter. Morning will bring no problem in sorting out the flocks. A shepherd makes his peculiar call and straightaway his flock, and only his flock, will follow him out. In answer to the call a leader sheep begins to move and all the others will follow. Jesus said "the sheep that belong to me listen to my voice: I know them and they follow me."

The way of a disciple is to follow the voice of the Lord. The life of faith is a response to a call. Indeed the whole bible is an ongoing story of call and response. Creation itself can be understood as God calling Adam out of nothingness.

At the beginning of revelation Abraham, 'our father in faith,' heard the call to venture forth in confidence. Moses heard the call, overcame all obstacles and led the people forth into freedom. Mary, immediately after receiving the call, set out in faith to visit Elizabeth.

Jesus received his call when the Spirit descended upon him at the Jordan. His journey began when the Spirit led him into the wilderness and then into the Galilean ministry. Jesus in turn called disciples, some of whom he called more intimately, to become shepherds of his flock. The risen Jesus shared his Spirit with these disciples, and sent them out as apostles to carry on his ministry.

We, the Church, are the community of believers who follow the voice of the risen Lord. He is always speaking to us esp.in his word: hence the importance of the Liturgy or Ministry of the Word at every sacrament, particularly at Mass.

Jesus lives on in intimate relationship with us his followers. He knows us individually and calls us by name into a relationship with him. Many hear a deeper call drawing them into a fuller commitment of life in the mission of Jesus. Jesus reminds that the harvest is great but the labourers few. The mission of Jesus needs many more voices.

Vocations Sunday today calls us to pray for more voices. It calls us to discern and reflect how he is calling each and every one of us to following more closely, and to encourage others to understand their lives as being open to the call of the risen Lord.

Prayer cards are here for you to take and use: Six ways to discover Vocations; Marian prayers for Vocations; Prayer for seminarians; Family prayer for Vocations; What will you do with your life?; Rosary for vocations, plus the Catenian Rosary leaflet.

The relationship established between Jesus and those who walk in His Way, is described in two images. One is of intimacy "I know them and they follow me", with all its concomitant sense of belonging and closeness.

The other is of sure reliance, assured and committed steadfastness "they cannot be lost or stolen".

Put together, these two aspects of our calling by Jesus Christ make for a kind of strength and assurance which St. Paul would call HOPE.