

4th Sunday Easter (A)

- For the Jews, the Talmud is a long book, actually, several volumes of over 6,000 pages & accompanies the O.T. as the primary source of Jewish religious law & theology.
- An old Talmudic riddle asks, 'Why did the Tower of Babel crumble?' And the answer is, 'Because the leaders of the project were more interested in the work than they were in the workers.'
- The rabbis explained that while the Tower was under construction, if a person dropped dead, no one cared, but, if a single brick fell and broke they would all cry out saying, 'When will there be another like it?'
- The story goes that God destroyed the Tower, not because they were trying to reach heaven, but because they were more interested in bricks than bricklayers.
- In this time of the Corona virus pandemic, what are we concerned about – the bricks or the bricklayers; what are the leaders of the world concerned about – the vested interests of the few, or the lives of the vulnerable?
- The quality & character of leaders is at this time particularly being tested & weighed in the balance, & how we emerge out of this time as nations & as a global community will be determined largely by the decisions made by our leaders.
- Today's Gospel reminds us what Christian leadership should look like.
- Jesus didn't liken it to princes in palaces or governors of provinces, but as Pope Francis hearkened back to what Jesus' understanding of shepherding was to be like – they need to have the smell of the sheep.
- Each of us, if we are responsible in care for others, be that as parents, teachers, older brothers & sisters, friends OR as leaders of nations, peoples & faith communities – are challenged by today's Gospel if we take heed of the call that Jesus extends to us.
- His metaphor was of a compassionate shepherd who sleeps in the field with his flock, one who knows them so well and loves them so dearly that he lays down his own life for them because the sheep are his concern.
- Today is referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday & is traditionally the time we are invited to focus on vocations & especially vocations to the priesthood & religious life & I could do that & it is valid & good to pray for these vocations.
- There is also a challenge for all parish communities to encourage vocations to priesthood & religious life from the young within their communities & there certainly is a need that we have for men and women to dedicate their lives to service of God's people.
- There are an increasing number of parishes without resident priests & as priests age, they are having to take on the leadership of 2 or more parish communities, **But** this may also be a blessing in disguise: This may provide the opportunity for greater responsibility to be taken on by people who are

not ordained & an opportunity for everybody to reflect upon the ministry of priesthood.

- We need to promote vocations to the priesthood & this needs to be a concern for us all, but I believe until we all have a deeper understanding of what it is to be the Church & share in the mission of the Church, there will not be an increase in those offering themselves for ordained ministry.
- Each one of us should deepen our understanding of what it is to be Church - each one of us to take a greater share in the mission of the Church & in the life of the parish – each of us is called to leadership.
- It is only when we understand how we are commissioned by our baptism to promote the values of the Gospel & the project of Jesus in the world & when we play a fuller role in parish that we will see an increase in the number of people who will be drawn to ministerial priesthood as a particular expression of the priesthood all of us are commissioned to exercise.
- I discovered my own vocation because I was surrounded by people who were very active in the life of the parish.
- Yes, there were some good priests who were passionate about their ministries, but the fact is that the greatest influence were the many people I knew who took their share of responsibility within the parish community & the wider world, that made all the difference for me.
- All of us, by our baptisms are anointed & commissioned to the priesthood of the Faithful, to be instruments of God's love to the world, to be people who lead others to God by our selfless care of others – all of us by the way we lead those for whom we are responsible – spouses to one another, parents for their children; brothers & sisters towards their siblings; friends towards their friends; teachers towards their students – anyone who has, or should have responsibility for others.
- The way we exercise our responsibilities determines the quality of our leadership, & this will be determined by our openness to be led by Jesus who is our shepherd & leader.
- The message of the gospel is clear – as church, we – all the baptised - have a mandate to be messengers/heralds/proclaimers/ministers of the Good News.
- A few years ago, one Saturday's Age had an article entitled "What money can buy" on Bill & Melinda Gates, who have committed more than tens of billions of dollars to address international health issues, providing medication for people with curable diseases who would otherwise die because they are in forgotten places in the world.
- A Geneva newspaper noted that the health of the world depends more on Bill Gates than on the World Health Organisation - He uses his talents to transform the world.
- How can you, how can we, use our imaginations to be shepherds caring for those in need, by utilising our God-given gifts?