



# The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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## Homily at Mass 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year C – 12 May 2019

To all mums and grandmothers: best wishes for a happy Mother's Day!

As we honour mothers and grandmothers today, the Church also wants to affirm, recognize and uphold the dignity of the family and the special vocation of husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. There's been plenty in the last week that supports and encourages us today. The always happy news of the birth of a baby – a special joy for Prince Harry and his wife Meghan with the safe birth of infant Archie Harrison. Labor leader Bill Shorten ought to be congratulated for all that he has said about his mum – the debt of love and gratitude he owes her, and his proud defense of her reputation. Great news too that Pakistani christian Asia Bibi is now safe in Canada, after 10 years solitary confinement and death threats and even the sentence of execution for alleged blasphemy – she is now re-united with her family and can begin a new life in safety and freedom. And Pope Francis is now following up on the special meeting with bishops early this year, issuing instructions to all bishops on how best to handle child abuse cases so that justice is done for all.

It is Mother's Day and Good Shepherd Sunday – World Day of Prayer for vocations. The word vocation comes from Latin *vocare* 'to call'. These days young people hear the word vocation used to describe their job. But for us, vocation has a more specific meaning: we use it to describe the call God makes to each person to be all that God wants each one of us to be. Marriage is a vocation – a call to a man and woman to live in love, captured best in the words of the wedding vow. "I will love you and honour you all the days of my life" – all the days, everyday: in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, until death. This is a huge commitment that can only be lived when a married couple rely entirely on God: faithful love, his grace and strength, and especially prayer, regular Sunday Mass, the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We also speak of the vocation – God's call – to the religious life: a life given, consecrated, entirely devoted to God as a religious sister or brother. The Church is rich with this sort of vocation: the ministry of teaching and nursing, pastoral care, evangelization and mission, hidden contemplative life, a life of silence, penance and prayer. Locally we know of the De La Salle brothers and for a long time the educational work of the Presentation sisters.

When Jesus says "I am the Good Shepherd" we think almost immediately of the shepherd's care, love and leadership that we find in our bishops and priests. No two priests are the same – all of us know this from our own experience of priests we've known since childhood. Some priests are excellent pastors. Others shine in different ways: education, working and learning; organizing fetes and raffles; great orators and preachers; gentle and compassionate confessors; fathers to the young; friends to the elderly and sick. In every generation Jesus the Good Shepherd chooses men to be shepherds of his flock, his sheep and lambs. Our diocese is blessed with a remarkable body of priests. We can all be proud of 36 seminarians at Corpus

Christi College Carlton and Rome. But when you look at the poster in the Church porch, one thing stands out: Glen Huntly is not represented! Let's do all that we can to remedy that soon!

Whenever I think of vocation my thoughts often go to Bl John Henry Newman. Newman was born in London in 1801. He first felt God's personal call about the age of 15 – he said he felt a certain warmth, we would say a tingling sensation, that woke within him a personal, close, warm friendship with God. This led him first to the Anglican ministry in which he stood out as a preacher and writer, but he particularly shone with the gift of friendship. Around the age of 40 God seemed to call Newman again – this time to take brave steps in Christian life and to enter the Catholic Church. This did not come without deep feelings of perplexity: he spoke of it as “loss and gain”. Becoming a Catholic in Victorian England meant that Newman lost many friends and a lot of social respect. But he also found that he gained deep peace. Like a ship coming from stormy seas to a tranquil harbour was how Newman described it. He was ordained a Catholic priest in 1847. Pope Leo XIII created him a Cardinal in 1879. In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed him Blessed among the saints.

This is Bl Cardinal Newman's meditation on his life long experience of vocation:

*God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good: I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.*

*Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.*

*If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.*