



Dear friends,

This coming Sunday 2nd of May, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, is traditionally known as ‘Good Shepherd’ Sunday. The readings of the Mass, especially the gospel of John (10:1-10) focus upon Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The photo of Pope Francis, carrying a baby lamb on his shoulders, highlights for us that he is the Good Shepherd leading us through these difficult times, as Jesus led his people through their suffering to the glory of the Resurrection from the dead into eternal life.

Jesus says in the gospel today: “The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep listen to his voice, one by one he calls his own and leads them out.” Jn (10:3). In Jesus’ time, sheep from various flocks would be kept in a fenced area to protect them from thieves and wolves. In the morning, the shepherd would call his flock, and the sheep would recognise the voice of the shepherd and follow him out. There was a direct, intimate relationship between the Shepherd and his sheep.

Pope Francis has reinforced this relationship between pastor and people when writing in his letter to the Church entitled ‘The Joy of the Gospel,’ he said that: “pastors should know the smell of their sheep.” This line was much quoted by bishops and priests from pulpits throughout the world, which often brought a smile to people’s faces. Of course, Pope Francis is right in suggesting this strong relationship because it still remains the foundation of our communities. We appreciate that all is not as clearly defined as it was in the past. Parishes, families, neighbourhoods, a sense of belonging and purpose were much more valued and treasured then they are today. But the challenge remains for us, to keep those connections going and persevere to try and maintain that sense of belonging and community.

If the Coronavirus has taught us one thing: it is that we now realise how difficult physical separation is for us who are created in love by God, to

love for one another. While the wonders of technology, (I've been in plenty of 'Zoom' conferences lately), continue to astound the human imagination, there is nothing more needed than the touch and embrace of another human being.

God created us for relationship, Jesus gives us the example of the Good Shepherd as one who leads us through the darkest moments, 'near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.' (Psalm 22)

May our journey allow the Good Shepherd to lead us through the trials of this life, into the eternal life to come.

May the Lord bless all,

Fr Kelvin