

Vocations Sunday Homily

The Reverend David Morris | Diocesan Director of Ordinands

"Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a heart and that this heart was burning with love. I understood that it was love alone that made the Church's members act, that if love were ever extinguished, apostles would not proclaim the Gospel and martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that love includes all vocations.... Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: "O Jesus, my Love ... at last I have found my vocation; my vocation is Love!"

These words of St Thérèse of Lisieux in her autobiography *'Story of a Soul'*, sum up the essence of every Christian vocation, it is rooted in, motivated by and sustained through, love. Thérèse recognised the centrality and universality of God's call to love as she discerned how she might serve him. Sadly, Thérèse died of tuberculosis aged only 24, nevertheless, despite an untimely death and at times during her life feeling quite small and insignificant, she became revered as a model of holiness and her spirituality known as 'the little way' has inspired greater faith and devotion in countless lives.

What was true of Thérèse is true of us, our vocation is love! And despite our own sense of inadequacy and feelings of insignificance, we have the potential to inspire others too.

A vocation is often described as a 'path of love', and each of us will find ourselves travelling unique vocational paths of love. Whatever paths we follow, we do so in response to God's love with the intention of expressing our love for him and reflecting his love to the world. So, whether it be through teaching, marriage, priesthood, medicine, humanitarian work, monasticism, parenthood, lay ministries, artistry, the single life, whatever it may be, we should hopefully recognise that through these vocational paths we offer our lives in the service of love, and God the scriptures tell us, is love. From him all authentic love flows and in him it finds its meaning.

On this Vocations Sunday the church invites us to consider whether or not we are living our lives most fully and authentically in the service of love. It's an opportunity to reflect on what paths of love we have already travelled and to contemplate whether there are paths to which we feel drawn or called, that we have yet to tread. Some of the readings appointed for today remind us of the character of love and we recall with gratitude during Eastertide the path of love Jesus followed as the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. His death and resurrection demonstrated to us the lengths to which love will go.

We know that when we follow a path, we can expect twists and turns, unexpected encounters, new insights and challenges. During the course of this year, as we have sought to tread with care along the as yet untraveled path of the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us will have experienced twists, turns, new insights and challenges in our personal journeys, you may have found yourselves fulfilling ministries you'd never thought possible before, doing new things in the service of love. We've certainly found that the loving action of the church through her members during this extraordinary time has been a lifeline to many.

And so, inspired by the example of St Thérèse of Lisieux, whether our lives are long or short, may we never tire in the pursuit of love, our vocation, and in the service of him who first loved us. And whatever path of love we find ourselves travelling, may the Good Shepherd be our guardian and our guide.