

# ‘Vocation is Today; the Christian Mission is Now’

Fr Willie Purcell Reflects on Pope Francis’ Message for Vocations Sunday, 22 April

The purpose of the World Day of Prayer for Vocations is to pastorally fulfil the Lord’s instruction to ‘Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest’ (Mt 9:38). On Vocations Sunday, we pray that men and women will hear and respond generously to the Lord’s call to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life.

In his message for this year’s Vocations Sunday, Pope Francis lists three key elements that lie at the heart of hearing and answering the vocational call: listening, discerning, and living.

## A listening heart

The listening heart reveals to us that ‘God comes silently’ and that, without a listening heart, the voice of God can be drowned out by the distractions of daily life. The noise and clamour of the world often lead us away from hearing what God is saying to us in the bits and pieces of our lives.

‘Nowadays listening is becoming more and more difficult, immersed as we are in a society full of noise, overstimulated and bombarded by information ... This prevents us from pausing and enjoying the taste of contemplation, reflecting serenely on the events of our lives, going about our work with confidence in God’s loving plan, and making a fruitful discernment.’

In his message, Pope Francis reminds us that Christians need ‘to listen carefully to his word and the story of God’s life, but also to be attentive to the details of our own lives’. It is easy for us to identify with the words of Pope Francis, for it is often in the ordinary experiences of our daily lives that we experience the extraordinary presence of God. Many priests, religious and deacons would say that it was at the most unexpected time in their lives that they felt the call of Jesus the Good Shepherd to come and follow him.

## Discernment

Turning to the theme of spiritual discernment, Pope Francis says that this is ‘a process by which a person makes



Recent gathering of vocations directors of western dioceses, in Knock

fundamental choices, in dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with the choice of one’s state in life’.

The Christian vocation always has a prophetic dimension, since current events in a person’s life and in the world must be examined ‘in the light of God’s promise’.

Every Christian ought to grow in the ability to ‘read within’ his or her life, and to understand where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on their mission.

## Living one’s vocation

There is a note of urgency in the Holy Father’s message to us. He writes ‘Vocation is today! The Christian mission is now!’

Each one of us is called – whether to the lay life in marriage, to the single life, to the priestly life in the ordained ministry, or to a life of special consecration – in order to become a witness of the Lord, here and now.

We are all called to live out our vocation wherever God wants us to be, and there is no reason to fear God’s call, even to a life consecrated to God’s kingdom.

‘It is beautiful – and a great grace – to be completely and forever consecrated to God and the service of our brothers and sisters.’

Pope Francis concludes his message for World Day of Prayer for Vocations by reminding us that the Lord never stops calling men and women to follow him. We should, like Mary, respond with a generous ‘Yes,’ without fear of our limitations, but instead with open hearts to hear the voice of the Lord. We must listen to that voice, discern our personal mission in the Church and the world, and live it today.

May Mary Most Holy, who as a young woman living in obscurity heard, accepted and experienced the Word of God made flesh, protect us and accompany us always on our journey.

‘Wherever there is life, fervour, and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise. Even in parishes where priests are not particularly committed or joyful, the fraternal life and fervour of the community can awaken in the young a desire to consecrate themselves completely to God and the preaching of the gospel.’

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 107

Fr Willie Purcell  
National Vocations Coordinator  
Columba Centre, Maynooth, Co Kildare  
Email [willie.purcell@iecon.ie](mailto:willie.purcell@iecon.ie)