

**Pastoral Letter of the  
Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham  
appointed to be read at all Masses  
on the Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Saturday 25 / Sunday 26 April 2015**

Dear friends in Christ,

Our First Reading today, from the Acts of the Apostles, describes how the Church carries on the life, mission and message of Jesus; St Peter tells his hearers that everything the Church does is in 'the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, [...] whom God raised from the dead' (*Acts 4:10*).

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church continues to speak for Jesus Christ today, and draws us closer to him in all that she does. We share in the Church's task through our Baptism, in which we were consecrated to carry on the life, mission and message of Jesus in our own daily lives.

To help us do this, God has established within his Church a threefold order of Bishops, priests and deacons. They are called, from among the baptised, to glorify God and serve him in their brothers and sisters, in obedience to Christ, the Servant King, who washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. In Jesus' name, they nourish those entrusted to their care with the challenge and the joy of the Gospel, strengthen them with the sacraments, and lead them by setting an example of faith, hope and love.

We are extremely fortunate in our Diocese to have good, caring and hardworking priests, who are totally dedicated to the ministry given to them at their Ordination; we should all be enormously grateful for their hard work, and I would like to thank them for their labours.

It is always a beautiful moment during the Chrism Mass in St Barnabas' Cathedral each Holy Week, when we, your priests, renew our Ordination promises 'to be more united with the Lord Jesus and more closely conformed to him', 'not seeking any gain but moved only by zeal for souls' (*Roman Missal*, p 322). We priests do not always live up to this calling, but the vocation to the priesthood is challenging, joyful, tiring, engaging, multifaceted – and utterly rewarding for all whom the Lord has blessed with it.

And the Lord does grace his Church with vocations to the priesthood! God willing, we are going to be blessed this year by the Ordination of five men – Kevin Athaide, David Bowler, Richard Edey, Kevin Gradwell and Jonathan Rose. We currently have eleven men preparing for Ordination to the priesthood, and thirteen who are training to be permanent deacons.

However, we are all too aware of the difficulties that the Church continues to face as she journeys into the twenty-first Christian century. This year, we will have no one beginning to train for Ordination to the priesthood for our Diocese. This is both unfortunate and challenging: unfortunate because we need good and holy priests to serve us in the years to come, priests who will lay down their lives for their sheep following the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd; challenging because it should make us reflect about what we can do, each and every one of us, to promote and encourage vocations to the priesthood in our own families, parishes, chaplaincies, schools and communities – and also to help those who are called to listen to the voice of the Lord, to place themselves in his hands, and to ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to accept that call and offer their whole lives in his service. The responsibility belongs to all of us.

Today, we pray particularly for our priests and vocations to the priesthood. But we must not forget our deacons, who do so much in our parishes as ministers of the word, of the Altar and of charity, and our men and women religious. During this Year of Consecrated Life, we remember the great debt of gratitude that we owe our religious for their presence among us. By their prayer and their apostolate, whether contemplative or active, they enrich the life of our Diocese in ways known ultimately to God alone. We also pray for married couples, that they may be true to their vocation and build up families of love, welcome and peace, and for single people, whose vocation is so often forgotten and yet who witness to God creatively in their daily lives.

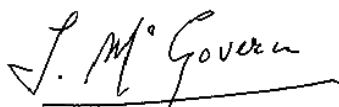
So this Good Shepherd Sunday, and in the weeks and months ahead, I invite us all to pray ardently for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life – not just in a generic way, but in our own families and communities. To help us do this, prayer cards will be distributed to as many people as possible this weekend.

On the front is a picture of the statue of Our Blessed Lady in St Barnabas' Cathedral, our mother church – we should never shirk from bringing her our needs and intentions; on the back, there is a prayer for vocations, which I would like us all to say regularly, at Mass and at home, so that it becomes part of our daily prayer:

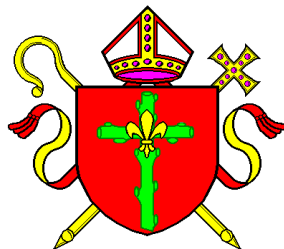
Almighty God, give us holy priests to strengthen us in our Christian calling, that we may be more closely conformed to Christ and share more effectively in his saving work. Through their ministry at the Altar and by their administration of the sacraments, may our lives be sanctified and become more closely associated with the redemptive love of Christ. As they preach the Gospel and teach the faith, may we be inspired to dedicate our lives to the work of evangelisation. As they serve our parishes, may we be led into a deeper communion of faith, hope and love. O God, bless the Diocese of Nottingham also with deacons, and with men and women who will serve the mission of the Church by taking religious vows, inspiring us with lives consecrated to you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May Mary Immaculate, St Hugh of Lincoln and all the saints of our Diocese pray for us, so that we may continue the life, mission and ministry of Jesus, 'for of all the names in the world given to us, this is the only one by which we can be saved' (*Acts* 4:12). We also pray that the Lord will soon send us a new Bishop of Nottingham to guide us in our task.

With my prayers and every good wish for you and your families,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Mc Govern". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Rev Mgr Canon Thomas McGovern Prot Ap  
Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of Nottingham



**Bishop's House  
Nottingham**

**April 2015**