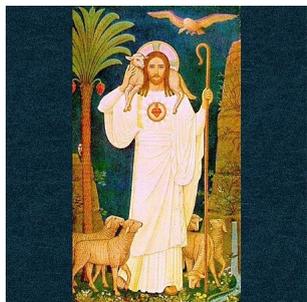


Sunday 12 May 2019: Fourth Sunday of Easter / Good Shepherd Sunday / World Day of Prayer for Vocations

I give my sheep eternal life



Prayer for Vocations

O God, who chose the apostles to make disciples of all nations, and who by Baptism and Confirmation has called us to build up your Holy Church, we implore you to choose from among us, your children, many priests and religious who will love you with their whole hearts and will gladly spend their lives to make you better known and loved by all.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary Sparked Her Son's Vocation

One could imagine a Jewish mother of a single son, while attending a wedding, might nudge her son to go dance with the young women perhaps because she is ready for grandchildren! Not so with Mary at the wedding in Cana. She, of course, knew her son's divine origins and suspected his divine mission. So instead, she sparked the beginning of Jesus' public ministry as well as his priestly ministry, because turning water into wine was a foreshadowing of him turning wine into his Blood. Thus, we see in Mary an example of a mother who not only nurtured life, but also nurtured a vocation.

On the topic of mothers, as we also celebrate Mother's Day today in Australia, let us pause to consider Fr Andy's reflection:

When I was a child we did not celebrate Mother's Day. My mother, who believed strongly in Saints Days, thought Mother's Day a new fangled trick by American Department Stores to wangle money out of families. She may also secretly have thought that one day out of 365 - and 366 each leap year - was a poor return for what mothers gave of themselves, their time and their labour.

However that may be, the day does give us the opportunity to thank our mothers and to reflect on the distinctive contribution that mothers make to society through their care of their children. The day forms a triptych with Father's Day and Family Day in expressing gratitude to people who shape our lives as children. Each of these days celebrates relationships that bless us as human beings.

Mother's Day points to the importance of being there and being well disposed in relationships, even if these qualities are often devalued. A mother's disposition and behaviour during pregnancy and the first months after birth contributes to the health and happiness of the growing child. Basic trust and security develop in this time. The subsequent relationship with the mother, or with the person who offers encouragement and nurturing, also help shape the basic dispositions of the child in adulthood. The lasting importance of mothers is brought out in times of desolation - in war or in detention centres, for example - many adults cry out at night for their mothers.

For that reason Mother's Day is not simply a celebration for the family but for society. It is a chance for society to recognise the importance of mothers and to honour and facilitate their contribution. This poses a dilemma today because the premise on which our economy is built is that people are valued by the economic contribution they make to society, and so are expected to work in the market. But no value is put on the mother's contribution at home. This puts a heavy burden on single mothers, who are often already burdened by not being able to share the care and nurturing of young children with partners, and who also often lack financial resources. They are often regarded in society as second class citizens instead of being admired for their generosity and so receiving help to discharge their responsibilities.

At Jesuit Social Services we often meet vulnerable young people who have been deprived of a caring mother early in their lives. We meet others who have been taken from their homes and confined in justice centres. Their lives are marked by this deprivation, and our own work lies in accompanying them building the trust in themselves and others they have never had. We know what a difference that adequate support for their mothers and carers in their early years might have made.

Mother's Day is a day to thank our own mothers and to acknowledge the debt we all owe to people who accept the responsibility of mothering. It is also a time for asking how as a society we can encourage mothering.

Fr Andy Hamilton | Image courtesy of [Hermano Leon Clipart](#)