

THE WORD

Year A • Season Colour: White • Psalter Week 4

SAFETY IN NUMBERS?

(JOHN 10:1-10)



During these Sundays of Easter, the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, describes the life and mission of the early Christian community. The extracts from the Gospel of John concentrate on the relationship of the individual disciple to Jesus.

In the image of the sheepfold, we can imagine more than one flock of sheep together. The animals do not have distinct markings, but this does not matter, as the way in which the particular shepherd gathers his own is to call them by name: the individual sheep recognises the voice of its own shepherd and comes obediently to him. The shepherd then walks off and the sheep follow trustfully: no need for dogs or whistles.

Jesus also describes himself as the gate of the sheepfold. Sometimes there was no gate or door to keep the sheep safe, so the shepherd would lie down across the opening and his body would then become the barrier to protect the flock from predators. But Jesus is more than that. He is offering ultimate safety, which we call salvation, pasture which the prophets declared the messianic shepherd would provide, and finally abundant life. Jesus is also making a contrast between himself and the leaders of the people who have failed in their responsibilities to care properly for those entrusted to them. ■

REFLECT

This passage is leading up to Jesus' describing himself as the Good Shepherd, the model for all those who are given a position of authority in the community. He will act out dramatically what this entails when he washes the feet of his disciples to teach them that authority manifests itself in humble service. The ultimate expression of this dedication to others is to lay down one's life for them: we can see this most clearly in the likes of Archbishop Oscar Romero who followed the example of Jesus in caring for his people to the extent of literally giving his life for them.

We might think today about our relationship with the risen Jesus. We consider in this Easter season that he entered into glory by way of the cross, so the gratitude which we feel is an important part of our attitude towards Jesus. It is, in some ways, easier and less demanding to think of ourselves as one of the flock, one of the crowd, and that Jesus gave his life for a vast and anonymous group. But John the evangelist does not let us off so lightly. In the Gospel today, Jesus is presented as calling his own sheep out of the amalgamated flocks one by one. He knows and can recognise each member of his own flock. Each one must respond: each one must follow. To cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus rather than simply be a member of the congregation is a challenge which some of us might rather not face: but the proper relationship of the disciple with Jesus, according to the Fourth Gospel is love; no one else can do that for us. ■

LEARN

A sheepfold would be formed of a circular stone wall with an opening; it would have thorny branches on the top to deter predatory animals.

Shepherds in the area would bring their flocks to a common sheepfold for safety at night and put them in together.

Smaller, more remote sheepfolds would have no gate or attendant: the shepherd would lie down across the opening to keep the sheep in and predators out.

DO

Look at the congregation at Mass: do you find it easier to imagine yourself as just one of the crowd or as a guest invited personally to a celebration? Remember that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows your name.



SAY

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want (Psalm 22:1)

PARISH OF DROMORE

Rev Feidhlimidh Magennis Tel: 07702665123

Parish website: www.stcolmans.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/stcolmans

St Vincent de Paul Helpline: 07738838187

Rev Dr Frank Rice, Deacon - Mobile: 07746-842977

Parochial House Dromore - Tel: 02892-692218

Parish email address: office@stcolmans.org

Diocesan Safeguarding Officer: Patricia Carville 07789 917741

Fourth Sunday of Easter

On Sunday, private masses offered at 9.45 (All Saints, Ballela) and 11.00 (St Colman's Dromore) for the intentions of all parishioners. **Holy Water** blessed at the Easter ceremonies is available in barrels at the doors of both churches for you to fill your own bottles

Anniversaries will continue to be offered at the private Sunday and weekday masses (Tues, Thurs and Fri).

Ballela Anniversaries

Sun 3 May – none

Sun 10 May – James, Rose & John Savage, Loughinisland

Dromore Anniversaries

Sun 3 May - none

Sun 10 May - none

Important information on Trócaire Boxes

While we are facing challenging times, we remember those communities across the world that are supported by Trócaire - Trócaire has already been asked to provide essential equipment like masks, gloves, testing kits, disinfectant and thermometers and to support awareness-raising and health advice through the use of social and broadcast media.

Trócaire needs our help more than ever. Owing to the current restrictions it will be difficult for the boxes to be returned in the normal way during the Easter ceremonies. Trócaire advises that parishioners donate online at <https://www.trocaire.org/donate/make-a-donation>

In this way vital donations will be received immediately and dispersed by Trócaire to where the money is most needed in the fight against Covid-19. Only where it is not possible for parishioners to donate online, they are asked to hold onto to their boxes until further notice. Trócaire will advise about how to return these when safe for people to do so.

3rd May 2020

Please note that the parish churches are closed in accordance with statutory regulations

The following actions will be taken in this parish:

- The churches are closed to the public (except for funerals).
- All celebrations (except funerals) are suspended.
- You can participate online in the celebration of Mass from several local churches via: www.mcnmedia.tv/cameras/county/northern-ireland
- The parish office is closed but we will still respond to phone calls.

Donating to the parish

The current health crisis is having a serious impact on donations to many charities. In this bulletin, we offer ways to make online donations to Trocaire (see opposite). Secondly, the Diocese has set up an online donation facility on the home page of the diocesan website (www.dromorediocese.com) where you can donate to the parish or to clergy support, once or on a monthly basis.

In line with the government's 'Stay at Home' and social distancing policies, parish envelopes will not be collected at this time. Parishioners who choose to use their weekly envelopes as normal, should retain their envelopes and, once Government policy allows, the parish will arrange to safely collect them.

The Diocese has become aware of a fraudulent scam targeting vulnerable people within parishes. Unscrupulous individuals are calling with vulnerable people and offering to take their weekly parish envelopes to the Church and also offering to do their shopping but wanting cash up front. The Diocese of Dromore would encourage all people, and particularly families of vulnerable adults, to be vigilant to such criminal activity. All such unsolicited approaches should be reported to the PSNI.

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**COVID-19
COUPLES & RELATIONSHIPS
SUPPORT LINE**



**IF YOU NEED TO SPEAK TO AN
EXPERIENCED COUPLES &
RELATIONSHIPS COUNSELLOR
DURING THIS TIME OF
UNPRECEDENTED STRESS AND
PRESSURE ON FAMILY LIFE...**

Contact:

028 9568 0151 003531 531 3331

9.00 am - 8.00 pm, Monday to Friday

All calls charged at local rate.

KEY ADVICE TIPS

Accord counsellors offer the following key tips to people at home at this time:

- For individuals living in fear at home, Accord counsellors are trained in identify and handling domestic abuse. In such situations the priority is the safety of the fearful person and their children. Accord can support an individual to develop a safety plan and can advise them of specialist crisis support contact numbers.
- In general, try and keep the lines of communication open with your spouse/partner
- Be conscious of how you raise issues with your partner. There are productive ways and unproductive ways of raising issues.
- Talk from your own feelings first and express what is difficult for you and what you feel you need rather than blaming and being critical of your partner. Criticism usually begets defensive, stonewalling or disproportionate responses.
- Be willing to look at yourself and your behaviour in addition to your partner's shortcomings. 'What is it like to be in relationship and to live with me?' is a good question to ask ourselves

- Self-management is a very good skill to hone in these pressurised and worrying times. It might be better to raise an issue at another time so that your partner can hear the cause of concern in a calmer context and to avoid an experience of perceived criticism or attack.

Advice re bereavement/serious illness

Insofar as issues such as bereavement or serious illness impact the couple relationship, callers can discuss these issues with a counsellor on the Support Line. If the issue is about a specific personal bereavement and/or health issue, then referral to a specialist may be required.

Advice/guidance on financial difficulty

If the issue relates to how the household finances are being managed or mismanaged that may be discussed by the caller. However, Accord does not offer financial advice but counsellors have relevant details of national support services which address personal finance problems.

First Communion and Confirmation

Archbishop Eamon has confirmed that First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation celebrations are postponed until a safe time in the future – now likely to be in the new academic year.

Community response to Coronavirus

Via Wings is offering its services to coordinate the provision of food bags to those who may become isolated and vulnerable during this Emergency. We are asked to help resource Via Wings by making donations of food either at its premises in Princes St, Dromore or in collection points in local shops (Vivo Essential, Eurospar, Tesco, Supervalu, Lidl). Please consider a donation when you are shopping. Please provide us with details of anyone whom you consider needs support by phoning the parish office with details.

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Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Faithful for the Month of May 2020

The month of May is a time when the People of God express with particular intensity their love and devotion for the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is traditional in this month to pray the Rosary at home within the family. The restrictions of the pandemic have made us come to appreciate all the more this “family” aspect, also from a spiritual point of view. For this reason, I want to encourage everyone to rediscover the beauty of praying the *Rosary* at home in the month of May. This can be done either as a group or individually; you can decide according to your own situations, making the most of both opportunities. The key to doing this is always simplicity, and it is easy also on the internet to find good models of prayers to follow. I am also providing two prayers to Our Lady that you can recite at the end of the *Rosary*, and that I myself will pray in the month of May, in spiritual union with all of you. I include them with this letter so that they are available to everyone. Dear brothers and sisters, contemplating the face of Christ with the heart of Mary our Mother will make us even more united as a spiritual family and will help us overcome this time of trial. I keep all of you in my prayers, especially those suffering most greatly, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. I thank you, and with great affection I send you my blessing.

FRANCIS

First Prayer

O Mary,
You shine continuously on our journey
as a sign of salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who, at the foot of the cross,
were united with Jesus’ suffering,
and persevered in your faith.

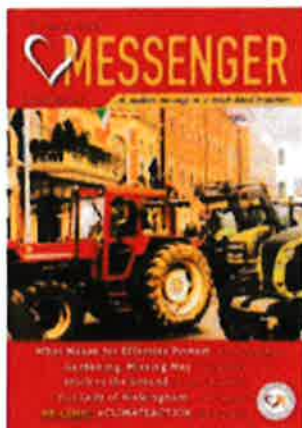
“Protectress of the Roman people”,
you know our needs,
and we know that you will provide,
so that, as at Cana in Galilee,
joy and celebration may return
after this time of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves to the will of the Father
and to do what Jesus tells us.
For he took upon himself our suffering,
and burdened himself with our sorrows
to bring us, through the cross,
to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

*We fly to your protection, O Holy Mother of God;
Do not despise our petitions in our necessities, but
deliver us always from every danger, O Glorious and
Blessed Virgin.*

(Second prayer available on diocesan website and will be published here next week).

GET THE DIGITAL EDITION OF THE MESSENGER FOR FREE!



A combination of ‘cocooning’ and the travel restrictions currently in place all around the country mean that many readers of *The Sacred Heart Messenger* cannot access their monthly ‘little red book’.

Therefore, during this coronavirus crisis we are delighted to make the digital edition of *The Messenger* available **FREE OF CHARGE** until we return to normal delivery

Please send your email request to:

c.henry@messenger.ie

and we will send you a link to view *The Messenger* on your laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

Do you need financial or practical assistance or even a friendly chat?

The St. Vincent De Paul Society is here to help. You can contact us through our helpline number: 07738838187