



Diocesan Centre
Coursington Road
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Rt Rev. Joseph Toal STB KC*HS
Bishop of Motherwell

21st April 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I hope this finds you well. I thank all who have been praying for my mother in her recent illness. She is recovering and appreciates your supportive prayers.

This coming Sunday, 4th Sunday of Easter, is Good Shepherd Sunday, which the Church keeps as our Day of Prayer for Vocations. I invite you all to offer your prayers on this day for Vocations to the ordained ministry and consecrated life. In his message for this Vocations Sunday, Pope Francis speaks of St Joseph, calling him *protector of vocations*:

"I like to think, then, of Saint Joseph, the protector of Jesus and of the Church, as the protector of Vocations. In fact, from his willingness to serve comes his concern to protect. The Gospel tells us that "Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night" (Mt 2:14), thus revealing his prompt concern for the good of his family. He wasted no time over things he could not control, in order to give full attention to those entrusted to his care. Such thoughtful concern is the sign of a true vocation, the testimony of a life touched by The love of God. What a beautiful example of Christian life we give when we refuse to pursue our ambitions or indulge in our illusions, but instead care for what the Lord has entrusted to us through the Church! God then pours out his Spirit and creativity upon us; he works wonders in us as he did in Joseph."

On this Vocations Sunday I ask the protection of St Joseph on those of Motherwell Diocese preparing for service in the Church as priests and permanent deacons. Two men will be ordained deacons this year - Christopher Morris, one of our seminarians in St Mary's College, Oscott, will be ordained in Oscott on 6th June by Archbishop Bernard Longley; and Michael Meechan will be accepted as a candidate and ordained as a permanent deacon later in the year. I ask your prayers for them both as they prepare for ordination. Likewise I ask your prayers for our other seminarians in Rome (Christopher Furmage, Ronan McQuade and Kieran Burt) and in Oscott (Colum Martin), as well as Christopher Igwe who will go to Oscott in September, and three others who will hopefully join the Propaedeutic Period in January 2022. Along with Michael Meechan, the Diocese has two other men preparing for the permanent diaconate – Kevin Kirby and Stuart Dick, both of St Vincent's in East Kilbride. If anyone reading this feels called to the priesthood or diaconate, and indeed to religious life, please make yourself known to your PP, who will assist you in your initial discernment and help you approach the Diocesan Vocations' Directors or an appropriate Religious Congregation.

Having mentioned St Vincent's, East Kilbride, I ask for your continued prayers also for its parish priest, Fr Ivan Boyle, who has been unwell in recent times. We wish him a speedy recovery

With my prayers and best wishes,

Yours in Christ,

+ Joseph Toal