

April 25, 2021

Dear Friends,

May the peace of the Risen Christ be with you!

Today on the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Jesus identifies himself as our Good Shepherd. "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me... for these sheep I will give my life." (John 10:11) We are grateful that our Risen Lord is a shepherd to each of us, that he knows us personally and is continually calling us by name, walking before us and guiding us to a deeper life with him.

Fittingly today we pray for the good shepherds in our lives, both in the domestic Church (parents, grandparents, godparents) and in the larger community of the Church (bishops, priests, deacons and religious). We need shepherds to guide us, care for us, teach us and protect us. I am forever grateful for the shepherds of my early life; the care and generosity of my parents, the fine example of the priests who served at my home parish, and the Sisters of Mercy who taught in our parochial school.

I encourage you to pray frequently for an increase of shepherds in the Church; asking God for generous young people to respond to the Lord's call in becoming a priest, deacon, sister or brother. Our Office of Vocations, under the direction of Fr. Steven Beatty, will be implementing new initiatives in which we invite our youth to consider if God is calling them to serve in the priesthood or religious life. Please join me in praying daily for God to bless our efforts and for our youth to be inspired to serve the Lord joyfully.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Michael McGovern
Bishop of Belleville

PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

Gracious God,

You have called us through Baptism to discipleship,
believing in your Son, Jesus Christ,
who has sent us to bring the Good News of salvation to the world.

We pray to you, asking that you grant us more priests and religious
who will help us build up your Church in the Diocese of Belleville and the world.

Stir up the grace of a religious vocation in the hearts of many of our youth.
Grant to them the willingness and generosity to give of themselves
in service to our Lord Jesus and his people.

May a new generation of priests, deacons, sisters and brothers
be a sign of your presence among us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.
Amen.