



St Michael's Parish, Traralgon
in partnership with
St Mary's Parish, Yarram
and including
St Columbkille's, Glengarry
St Gerard's Woodside



St Michael's Vision Statement : Inspired by Jesus Christ, we are a welcoming Catholic Community seeking to enrich lives. Come and join us!

St Michael's Mission Statement:

To provide opportunities for parishioners –

- to grow in holiness
- to discover and live out their personal and community call to mission to live as Catholics who effectively transform society.

St Mary's Vision Statement: The Council aims to foster and encourage all baptized Catholics to grow in their love of Jesus, their fidelity to the Catholic Church and to reach out to all members of our worldwide community.

St Mary's Mission Statement: To foster and co-ordinate activities that encourage all baptized Catholics to take responsibility for the life and mission of their Church.

Statement of Commitment to the safety of children and vulnerable adults: Central to the mission of St Michael's and St Mary's Parishes is an unequivocal commitment to fostering the dignity, self-esteem and integrity of children, young people and vulnerable adults and providing them with a safe, supportive and enriching environment to develop spiritually, physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially.

St Michael's Parish Information

Fr Francis Otobo Parish Priest
Fr Saji John Assistant Priest
Parish Centre 5174 2060
Priests' Residence: 5174 6765
56 Loch Park Road, Traralgon

Sr Doreen Dagge RSJ 5174 9997

Monsignor John Allman
O'Mara House 5174 9674

St Michael's Parish Office 5174 2060
33 Kay Street, Traralgon Fax 5174 2981
Parish Secretary: Mrs Bev O'Brien
Email: sec@smpt.org.au
web: www.smpt.org.au
Office hours –
Tuesday to Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm
Sacraments Admin: Mrs Jenifer Hanratty

Baptisms: Four weeks notice required
Weddings: Six months notice required

Parish Pastoral Council

Susan Grout Chairperson, Fr Francis, Fr Saji, Sr Doreen, Greg Imhagwe, Rose Pearson, Kevin Taylor, Ray Moretti, Rob Tarraran, Cathy Blackford, Ros Joyner, Doug Doherty and Chris DiCorleto.

Our Schools:

St Gabriel's School 5174 5515
Principal: Mrs Roslyn Joyner

St Michael's School 5174 3295
Principal: Mrs Cathy Blackford

Lavalla Catholic College 5174 5272
Principal: Mr John Freeman
Kildare Campus 5174 8111
St Paul's Campus 5174 7355

'I have come that you may have life to the full.'

The imagery of shepherd, sheep and gate of the sheepfold suggests a close, almost familial, relationship that is lost outside its Middle Eastern context. Even today, on the hillsides of Judea one can see a Bedouin boy, or perhaps an old man, leading his small flock numbering between three and ten sheep. The shepherd walks in front, guiding the flock along the craggy paths seeking whatever grass there may be. In a country such as Israel, where arable land is scarce, fenced paddocks are used for crops not for mobs of grazing sheep. Sheep wander on the hillsides foraging where they can and the shepherd must keep an eye out for danger, and to prevent any from straying. When a lamb is born it could be named according to its physical features, or other characteristics – 'snowy', 'hungry', 'scamp.' A village might have a communal sheepfold protected by one gatekeeper. In the morning each shepherd would call out his sheep, by voice, or using a pipe. The sheep would recognise the sound and follow their shepherd. In the summer, temporary shelters could be made outside the village using briars and stones. This type of shelter has no door so the shepherd would sleep across the doorway, acting as the door protecting his flock.

In the Scriptures the imagery of shepherding was used to speak of leadership. Kings who failed to lead their people according to covenant values were judged as 'bad shepherd,'

and according to Ezekiel 34, God is to be the good shepherd of Israel, binding up the wounded, seeking out the lost, and leading Israel to good pasture. So the image would have been familiar to Jesus' audience, both from their life experience and from their Scriptures. The audience would know how vulnerable the sheep were to wild animals, dangerous paths, falls and scarcity of pasture. They would know that the survival of the sheep depended on the skill and attentive care of the shepherd. In this context, Jesus speaks of himself as 'the gate of the sheepfold'. He is the one who lies across the doorway, the way in to safety, and the way out to good pasture. The imagery leads to the sharp contrast between the thief who comes to bring death and destruction, and Jesus who comes to bring life. Life in its fullness. This is the Easter gift that God offers us through Jesus. Such life is not ordinary physical life but an entirely new quality of life that in John's Gospel is called 'eternity life'. This is the quality of God's life in eternity. This quality of life is like being born a second time, as Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3. But, as the parable suggests, this life can be threatened by thieves and brigands.

Continued on page 3.



SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Saturday	6.00pm	St Michael's Traralgon
Sunday	9:30am	St Michael's Traralgon
	10:00am	St Mary's Yarram
	10:00am	St Columbkille's Glengarry
	6:00 pm	St Michael's Traralgon

WEEKDAY LITURGY TIMES

1st to 6th May

Mon 08	11:00am	Requiem Mass for Paul Denny, St Michael's
Tues 09	9:30am	Mass, St Michael's
	11:00am	Mass, St Mary's
Wed 10	10:00am	Mass, St Mary's
	11:00am	Adoration and Mass, St Michael's
	12:00pm	Mass, St Michael's
Thu 11	9:30am	Mass, St Michael's
Fri 12	9:30am	Mass, St Michael's
Sat 13	9:30am	Mass, St Michael's

Rosary: Tuesday to Sunday 30 minutes before Mass.

Reconciliation: Saturdays 10:15am & 5:30pm or any time by arrangement with Father.

BAPTISMS: This week we welcome for Baptism Jed John and Sophie Ava Williamson, son and daughter of Benjamin and Sarah. Congratulations to the family, from us all.



The next meeting for those preparing for Baptism is on **Tuesday 16th May at 7:00pm in the Parish Centre.** Please contact the Parish Office on 5174 2060 for further information.

CHARISMATIC PRAYER GROUP: The CPG meets every Thursday evening at 7:30pm in the Mary MacKillop Hall.

There will be a **Healing Mass** on Thursday 11th May with Fr Francis celebrating. Come along and experience God's healing in your life.

The CPG are celebrating 40 years of meeting weekly for prayer, worship, talks and fellowship. All parishioners are invited to come and join in the celebrations on Sunday 21st May from 10:30am to 4:30pm in the Mary MacKillop Hall. Guest speakers are Adrian Commadeur and Fr Francis.

All are welcome to come and join in! Enquiries to Cathy on 5174 3001

CONFIRMATION 2017: We are fortunate to have a number of youngsters in the Parish who are wishing to make the next step in their sacramental journeys.

The Confirmation timeline is :-

Tuesday 9th May 4:30pm, Mary MacKillop Room, Catechist Session 3

Weekend Masses May 13 & 14 – Confirmation Pin Masses

Tuesday 16th May 4:30pm, Mary MacKillop Room, Catechist Session 4

Wednesday 17th May 4:00pm and 5:30pm – Parent/Child Workshop 2.

Friday 19th May, Saturday 20th May – 6:00pm Mass – Celebrations of the Sacrament of Confirmation.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS:

This week, we celebrate the World Day of Prayer for Vocations. (see page 3). As part of our celebrating here in St Michael's we warmly welcome **Hiep Nguyen** to our Parish for the weekend. Hiep is currently a seminarian undertaking studies to become a priest.

A full copy of Pope Francis' letter for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations is available on our website, www.smpt.org.au, included in the Bulletin for May 07.

SMY@L – St.Michael's Parish Youth Group

St.Michael's Youth group is for all young people from **Year 5, 6 & lower secondary levels (from any school).** SMY@L meet in the Mary MacKillop Hall a few times each school term, and run a variety of activities in a safe, friendly environment with leaders from our Parish Community who all have current Working With children Checks. We meet on a Friday night.

Participants are signed in and out at the end of each session. Our leaders all have experience in working with young people.

FRIDAY 19th MAY . . . TRIVIA NIGHT

Make up your own team, or join a team on the night. Lots of games, trivia and prizes to be won. Dance comp and prizes for best dressed. @ St.Michael's Mackillop Hall, Church Street, 6.30pm – 8.30pm Cost \$3 - All Welcome! Contact Lou 5175 8077 for info.

OUR LADY OF FATIMA: This year marks the centenary of the Apparitions of Our Lady to three children Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta at Fatima in Portugal. The messages of Our Lady to the children, particularly the call to pray the Rosary, interceding for world peace, has been embraced by Catholics in the early part of the twentieth century.

In order to celebrate the centenary of the Apparitions at Fatima, Pope Francis has declared a Jubilee Year, with the inherent plenary indulgence, from 27 November 2016 – 26 November 2017.

The Holy Father will travel to Fatima in May for the centenary anniversary celebrations.

CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF OUR LADY'S FIRST APPARITION AT FATIMA:

St Brigid's Church Cowwarr,
Saturday May 13

9:00am Fatima Prayers & Rosary
9.00-10.30am Reconciliation
10.00am morning tea
11.00am Fr Ken Clark, Fatima and our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary
12.00pm Marian Procession, crowning of Our Lady and Mass
1.00pm BYO lunch
2.00 The Message of Fatima and Indulgence
Closing with the Divine Mercy Chaplet

PLEASE PRAY FOR: We remember those who have died recently including Paul Denny and Ken Edebohls and all those whose anniversaries occur at this time including Alice Peck, Petrus Aalbers, David Brennan, Carmen Cook, Ted McEntee, Piero Colantuono, Ted and Sheila Caldwell and Mons James O'Mara.

Lord, let your perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

WE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK:

including Maria Alessandrini, Barbara Greaves, John Besselink, John O'Brien, Barry Arbuthnot, Damian Black, Joyce Martin, Jenny Hansch, Ken Vivian, Marie Howard, Adrian Stasinowsky, Pat O'Mara, Robert Hazelman, Alan Douch, Veronica Barter, Fr Frank Freeman, Carolyn Gleeson, Gary Donchi, Anna Lapuh, Louis Janssen, Rita Sweeney, Peter Heron, Father Frank Young, Sarah Parker **and all who seek our prayers.**



New Testament Commentary, continued . .

At the time when the Gospel was written (late 90's C.E.) the community must have felt themselves under threat from outside forces. The emphasis in the parable is that of safety. The shepherd will protect his flock from harm. The parable assures these believers that Jesus will protect them. In the first century the threats were real. The community was experiencing a great struggle with Judaism and the Romans. From time to time, that struggle even became persecution. In Australia we have rarely experienced open conflict, let alone persecution for religious reasons, but there are many places in the world today where this is a reality – Indonesia, Israel, Pakistan, Ireland.

The dangers that threaten us are more subtle. We don't need thieves and brigands to steal us from the flock, our own hearts can readily leave the community lured by values that are not Christian. In the desire for greater affluence we can allow policies to limit refugee intake at a time when this is a humanitarian crisis. To have greater profit margins, companies may reduce the workforce making many jobless without prospect of future employment. Present wealth and comfort may impede ecological responsibility for the future. These are Gospel issues not just economic or political. This year we will hear Matthew criteria for entry into the reign of God: those who help the sick, offer shelter to the homeless, care for prisoners. These are very practical ways of evaluating Christian behaviour.

Listening to today's word let us reflect on what are the real things that threaten Christian living. Thieves and brigands would be much easier to fight than the subtle dangers we Christians face today.

Mary Coloe, PBVM

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS:

The 2017 message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations was released Wednesday entitled, "Led by the Spirit for Mission".

In the message for this 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, the Pope reflects on the missionary dimension of our Christian calling.

The Holy Father says that "commitment to mission is not something added on to the Christian life as a kind of decoration, but is instead an essential element of faith itself. A relationship with the Lord," he adds, "entails being sent out into the world as prophets of his word and witnesses of his love."

Even if at times when "we are conscious of our weaknesses and tempted to discouragement", Pope Francis underlines, "we need to turn to God with confidence", and he reiterates that by "virtue of baptism, every Christian is a "Christopher", a bearer of Christ, to his brothers and sisters."

In the message divided into three subtitles, the first being "Jesus is anointed by the Spirit and sent", the Holy Father explains that, "to be a missionary disciple means to share actively in the mission of Christ."

In the second heading, "Jesus is at our side every step of the way", Pope Francis describes how "the questions lurking in human hearts and the real challenges of life can make us feel bewildered, inadequate and hopeless." But he goes on to say, "if we contemplate the risen Jesus walking alongside the disciples of Emmaus we can be filled with new confidence."

(continued next column)



(World Day of Prayer for Vocations, continued):

In the third subtitle, "Jesus makes the seed grow", the Pope says that, "it is important to let the Gospel teach us the way of proclamation." "The seed of the Kingdom", he adds, "however tiny, unseen and at times insignificant, silently continues to grow, thanks to God's tireless activity."

Concluding his message the Holy Father underlines that, "there can be no promotion of vocations or Christian mission apart from constant contemplative prayer and he encourages this kind of profound friendship with the Lord, "above all for the sake of imploring from on high new vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life."

A full copy of Pope Francis' letter for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations is available on our website under Bulletins, www.smpt.org.au.

FINANCE MATTERS:

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ...'" ACTS 2:38

The word "repent" means to turn from sin, to change our actions. When it comes to change, do we take responsibility for change or do we think that others have to change instead? Change that is permanent comes from within, we must take control and be disciplined. Remember though that we are not alone, Jesus is there to help lighten the load.

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN:

If you wish to have information about our Planned Giving programme please contact the Parish Office.

Counters: May 07 Mitchell Team
May 14 Burns Team

Rosters for May 14th ~ Fifth Sunday of Easter

Mass	Lector	Commentator	Eucharistic Ministers	Welcomers	Music	Sacristan
Saturday 6:00pm	A Taylor	S Hill	J Scholtes, C Livesey, R Tactor, Volunteer	G & D Bassett		D Buckland
Sunday 9:30am	S Reid	C Livesey/ R Symonds	W Detering, D Prestipino, B&S Edgar, G Imhagwe, volunteer	C Payne, M Williamson	Jane	M Hanratty
Sunday 6:00pm	K Matters	J Panozzo-Tilé	J Fleming, S Luscombe, volunteers (x 2)	M Noone	Jane	L Theissling

- **Altar Cleaning:** May 07 S Edgar May 14 R Xuereb
 - **Church Cleaning:** May Sambell Group
 - **Children's Liturgy of the Word:** Shane and Amanda
 - **Touring Statue of Our Lady:** May 07 M Dick May 14 N & C Watts
- Please contact the family before you leave the statue to make sure they are home. Thank you. For further information regarding roster please contact: Marie Moulton 5174 0938 Email: memou_38@bigpond.com
- **Mick's Kitchen:** May 11 Clegg Team May 18 Scholtes Team

Entrance Antiphon Cf. Ps 32:5-6

*The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth;
by the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
alleluia.*

First Reading Acts 2:14 36-41

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ.

On the day of Pentecost Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd with a loud voice: 'The whole House of Israel can be certain that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ.'

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles, 'What must we do, brothers?' 'You must repent,' Peter answered 'and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God will call to himself.' He spoke to them for a long time using many arguments, and he urged them, 'Save yourselves from this perverse generation.' They were convinced by his arguments, and they accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 22:1-6 Rv1.

(R.) The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. **(R.)**
2. He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort. **(R.)**
3. You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. **(R.)**
4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. **(R.)**

Second Reading 1 Pt 2:20-25

A reading from the first letter of St Peter

You had gone astray but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The merit, in the sight of God, is in bearing punishment patiently when you are punished after doing your duty.

This, in fact, is what you were called to do, because Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed. You had gone astray like sheep but now you have come back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 10:14

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord;
I know my sheep, and mine know me.
Alleluia!

Gospel John 10:1-10

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

I am the gate of the sheepfold.

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly, I am the gate of the sheepfold. All others who have come are thieves and brigands; but the sheep took no notice of them.

I am the gate. Anyone who enters through me will be safe: he will go freely in and out and be sure of finding pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.'

Next weeks Readings – Sunday 14th May

First Reading: Acts 6:1-7

Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9

Gospel: John 14:1-12



**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR THE 54th WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

Led by the Spirit for Mission

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the last few years, we have considered two aspects of the Christian vocation: the summons to "go out from ourselves" to hear the Lord's voice, and the importance of the ecclesial community as the privileged place where God's call is born, nourished and expressed.

Now, on this 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, I would like to reflect on *the missionary dimension of our Christian calling*. Those who drawn by God's voice and determined to follow Jesus soon discover within themselves an irrepressible desire to bring the Good News to their brothers and sisters through proclamation and the service of charity. All Christians are called to be missionaries of the Gospel! As disciples, we do not receive the gift of God's love for our personal consolation, nor are we called to promote ourselves, or a business concern. We are simply men and women touched and transformed by the joy of God's love, who cannot keep this experience just to ourselves. For "the Gospel joy which enlivens the community of disciples is a missionary joy (Evangelii Gaudium, 21).

Commitment to mission is not something added on to the Christian life as a kind of decoration, but is instead an essential element of faith itself. A relationship with the Lord entails being sent out into the world as prophets of his word and witnesses of his love.

Even if at times we are conscious of our weaknesses and tempted to discouragement, we need to turn with God with confidence. We must overcome a sense of our own inadequacy and not yield to pessimism, which merely turns us into passive spectators of a dreary and monotonous life. There is no room for fear! God himself comes to cleanse our "unclean lips" and equip us for the mission: "Your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out. Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I, send me'" (*Is* 6:6-8).

In the depths of their heart, all missionary disciples hear this divine voice bidding them to "go about", as Jesus did, "doing good and healing all" (cf. *Acts* 10:38). I have mentioned that, by virtue of baptism, every Christian is a "Christopher", a bearer of Christ, to his brothers and sisters (cf. *Catechesis*, 30 January 2016). This is particularly the case with those called to a life of special consecration and with priests, who have generously responded, "Here I am, Lord, send me!" With renewed missionary enthusiasm, priests are called to go forth from the sacred precincts of the temple and to let God's tender love overflow for the sake of humanity (cf. Homily at the Chrism Mass, 24 March 2016). The Church needs such priests: serenely confident because they have discovered the true treasure, anxious to go out and joyfully to make it known to all (cf. *Mt* 13:44).

Certainly many questions arise when we speak of the Christian mission. What does it mean to be a missionary of the Gospel? Who gives us the strength and courage to preach? What is the

evangelical basis and inspiration of mission? We can respond to these questions by meditating on three scenes from the Gospels: the inauguration of Jesus' mission in the synagogue at Nazareth (cf. *Lk* 4:16-30); the journey that, after his resurrection, he makes in the company of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-35) and, finally, the parable of the sower and the seed (cf. *Mt* 4:26-27).

Jesus is anointed by the Spirit and sent. To be a missionary disciple means to share actively in the mission of Christ. Jesus himself described that mission in the synagogue of Nazareth in these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (*Lk* 4:18-19). This is also our mission: to be *anointed* by the Spirit, and to *go out to our brothers and sisters* in order to proclaim the word and to be for them a means of salvation.

Jesus is at our side every step of the way. The questions lurking in human hearts and the real challenges of life can make us feel bewildered, inadequate and hopeless. The Christian mission might appear to be mere utopian illusion or at least something beyond our reach. Yet if we contemplate the risen Jesus walking alongside the disciples of Emmaus (cf. *Lk* 24:13-15), we can be filled with new confidence. In that Gospel scene, we have a true "liturgy of the street", preceding that of the word and the breaking of the bread. We see that, at every step of the way, Jesus is at our side! The two disciples, overwhelmed by the scandal of the cross, return home on the path of defeat. Their hearts are broken, their hopes dashed and their dreams shattered. The joy of the Gospel has yielded to sadness. What does Jesus do? He does not judge them, but walks with them. Instead of raising a wall, he opens a breach. Gradually he transforms their discouragement. He makes their hearts burn within them, and he opens their eyes by proclaiming the word and breaking the bread. In the same way, a Christian does not bear the burden of mission alone, but realizes, even amid weariness and misunderstanding, that "Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise" (Evangeli Gaudium, 266).

Jesus makes the seed grow. Finally, it is important to let the Gospel teach us the way of proclamation. At times, even with the best intentions, we can indulge in a certain hunger for power, proselytism or intolerant fanaticism. Yet the Gospel tells us to reject the idolatry of power and success, undue concern for structures, and a kind of anxiety that has more to do with the spirit of conquest than that of service. The seed of the Kingdom, however tiny, unseen and at times insignificant, silently continues to grow, thanks to God's tireless activity. "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep or rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how" (*Mk* 4:26-27). This is our first reason for confidence: God surpasses all our expectations and constantly surprises us by his generosity. He makes our efforts bear fruit beyond all human calculation.

With this confidence born of the Gospel, we become open to the silent working of the Spirit, which is the basis of mission. There can be no promotion of vocations or Christian mission apart from constant contemplative prayer. The Christian life needs to be nourished by attentive listening to God's word and, above all, by the cultivation of a personal relationship with the Lord in Eucharistic adoration, the privileged "place" for our encounter with God.

I wish heartily to encourage this kind of profound friendship with the Lord, above all for the sake of imploring from on high new vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life. The

People of God need to be guided by pastors whose lives are spent in service to the Gospel. I ask parish communities, associations and the many prayer groups present in the Church, not to yield to discouragement but to continue praying that the Lord will send workers to his harvest. May he give us priests enamoured of the Gospel, close to all their brothers and sisters, living signs of God's merciful love.

Dear brothers and sisters, today too, we can regain fervour in preaching the Gospel and we can encourage young people in particular to take up the path of Christian discipleship. Despite a widespread sense that the faith is listless or reduced to mere "duties to discharge", our young people desire to discover the perennial attraction of Jesus, to be challenged by his words and actions, and to cherish the ideal that he holds out of a life that is fully human, happy to spend itself in love.

Mary Most Holy, the Mother of our Saviour, had the courage to embrace this ideal, placing her youth and her enthusiasm in God's hands. Through her intercession, may we be granted that same openness of heart, that same readiness to respond, "Here I am", to the Lord's call, and that same joy in setting out (cf. *Lk 1:39*), like her, to proclaim him to the whole world.

From the Vatican, 27 November 2016

First Sunday of Advent

Franciscus

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