

SUNDAY PLUS

Celebrate life!

All we, like sheep...

By Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

During lambing season, *Countryfile* presenters regularly climb into sheep pens. One episode showed the presenter, unasked, temporarily take over from an apprentice, knowing from experience that a ewe needed help beyond the learner's skills. As soon as the lamb was born, the youngster happily continued her work with mother and baby, very grateful for the unexpected expert help. So how would the shepherd in

today's Gospel feel if he had seen an unannounced stranger climb the fence towards his sheep in an apparently non-emergency situation? He probably wouldn't think of selling his animals or showing off his sheepdog. Might he think that an animal needed help? Would he check that none were missing?

We all like help in emergencies and are especially grateful for the expert who is providentially nearby. How many lives have been saved by off-duty members of the emergency services who just happened to be in the right place at the right time?

But Jesus wasn't including

the Pharisees in his list of "have-a-go heroes" – and they knew it. They saw for themselves that people went out into the desert to listen to John the Baptist and to Jesus. They were less likely to crowd into the synagogue or the Temple to listen to the latest words of wisdom falling from Pharisaic lips. The people were the sheep who recognised the voice of the good shepherd who really cared – and they followed. They didn't count the cost of their discipleship. For some, Jesus was a temporary diversion, for others a lifelong commitment.

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.



To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves.

Pope Francis

Unlikely shepherds

By Canon Paul Douthwaite

Everyone at some time will need a listening ear. To listen is not only an art but also a gift and a calling. In our prisons, the Samaritans train carefully chosen prisoners to be listeners – prisoners who will be a listening ear to their peers who are low or experiencing problems.

In the Gospel parable, Jesus describes himself as a shepherd

and his followers as attentively listening sheep. The sheep, the followers, who listen carefully and recognised his voice will be led to safety. Listening is a crucial part of being his followers.

The listeners in prison today have responded to God's call on two levels. They have responded to the voice of the shepherd leading them to safety and they have also responded to a calling or vocation. In becoming a listener, in listening to others, they are enabling their peers to experience, through them, a caring and loving God.

Canon Paul Douthwaite is the National Catholic Chaplain for Prisons and HMPPS Roman Catholic Faith Advisor.

Feast of the week Thursday 4 May Martyrs of England and Wales

In 1874 serious enquiries began into the lives and deaths of possible Catholic martyrs of the Reformation in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. The submitted list contained 353 names, to which six were added in Rome, making 359. Of those:

- 54 were beatified in 1886, of whom 2 were canonised in 1935 and 11 in 1970.
- 9 were beatified in 1895.

- 1 (Oliver Plunkett) was beatified in 1920 and canonised in 1975.
- 136 were beatified in 1929, of whom 29 were canonised in 1970.
- 85 were beatified in 1987.
- 285 were beatified at various times, of whom 43 were subsequently canonised.
- 30 were declared venerable, of whom 1, John Travers, was executed in Dublin and appears in Irish Catholic Martyrs.
- 315 were declared venerable, of whom 285 were subsequently beatified.
- 44 were postponed ("dilati") – 36 died in prison and 8 were postponed for other reasons.

Source: Wikipedia

Lord, let me follow you in all of life's ups and downs, joys and sorrows, successes and failures. Stay close to me at every moment of every day. Amen.

Today:
Acts 2:14, 36-41
1 Peter 2:20-25
John 10:1-10

Monday:
Acts 11:1-18
John 10:11-18

Tuesday:
Acts 11:19-26
John 10:22-30

Wednesday:
1 Corinthians 15:1-8
John 14:6-14

Thursday:
Acts 13:13-25
John 13:16-20

(E): The English Martyrs
(Feast): Acts 7:55-60;
Matthew 10:17-20

Friday:
Acts 13:26-33
John 14:1-6

Saturday:
Acts 13:44-52
John 14:7-14

Next Sunday:
Acts 6:1-7
1 Peter 2:4-9
John 14:1-12