

## Secondary School Assembly

### It's all about Prophets

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Why bother being a 'good' shepherd? This might seem like a strange question to us as we naturally link this title with Jesus but in the first century Palestine this would have been an obvious point. Would a 'good' shepherd have received a huge bonus at the end of the year? Would a 'good' shepherd have found the sheep to be well behaved and so give him an easier life? Would being a 'good' shepherd open the possibility of a promotion? .

Over the past year our economy has struggled. Many people have blamed business people who have, on occasion, been known to celebrate their company's profits by rewarding themselves with huge sums of money. Despite this situation, the BBC has once again commissioned a TV show entitled "The Apprentice". The programme features the multi-millionaire entrepreneur businessman Sir Alan Sugar who takes a group of men and women and sets them a series of challenges by which they have to make as much money in a particular task as they can. Each week, Sir Alan eliminates a contestant who fails to meet the mark and finally whittles the group down to a final contestant who becomes his apprentice. The expectation is that Sir Alan is looking for a ruthless young money grabber who seeks to win at any cost but fortunately we are constantly surprised. The final two contestants in last year's series Lee and Claire were certainly good at raking in the profits but there was so much more to these two people that made them so appealing. In describing the pair, their fellow contestants described the way that they loved what they did, they were happy, charismatic, and gifted people who galvanised people around them to do their best. In commenting on one of the less successful contestants the comedienne Victoria Wood summarised what it takes to truly be considered as an apprentice:

"The whole point of being clever and dynamic and motivated is that you get a job you enjoy, so that you enjoy your whole life and life doesn't start at six o'clock in the evening."

In this quotation Victoria Wood has hit upon the fundamental way in which Jesus challenged both the people of Palestine and us today. A 'good' shepherd is not someone who is miserable, down cast and a doom-monger. We know this for certain as Jesus is 'The' Good Shepherd upon which all are modelled. In Palestine, it was not a requirement of a shepherd that he be 'good' in order to earn his crust in fact it is not a requirement of any profession, job or trade that you enjoy what you do. However, imagine a world where people did seek to find a way of life that didn't just involve the drudgery of work in the day and pleasure in the evening or on holidays. A life where you made an active decision not to seek money, power and fame as the ultimate goal but rather sought the opportunity to use your talents in the service of others; a Vocation.

There are many people who answer a particular call to service in the Church such as members of Religious Communities, Deacons and Priests whose lives we especially celebrate during this special day of prayer. There are, however, others such as parents, teachers, medical professionals, married couples, single people and charity workers who also respond generously to His call. You might also be surprised to learn that there will certainly be people who work in business, the media and entertainment who have also responded to Jesus call to follow Him. Jesus does not set limits on who and in what

direction he calls us but anyone living a Vocation shares one common feature; their lives bear witness to a common truth that, despite the challenges, they love their calling and love Christ who calls them.

Those people courageous enough to answer Jesus call to follow Him today are the true prophets of our modern age. They are not perfect but they seek perfection by hoping to be more Christ like. The fruits of their Vocation are that they are people who show love, sacrifice, joy and hope in what they do and in who they are.

### **Points to reflect on**

When we think about our 'career' after we leave school and university, we need to think beyond money, status and personal fulfilment. These questions however arise throughout a student's life since each choice made now affects future choices. Are our choices ethical? Are we thinking beyond our own needs and desires? Have we asked God for guidance?

The posters for Vocation Sunday this year show a group of people around a board table. Their name plaques show they have made the choice to live life as a married person or a priest, monk or nun. What sacrifices do all these vocations require?

### **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, help me to become all You desire of me.  
Inspire me to make a difference in others' lives. Lead me to choose the way of life You have planned for me. Amen