



✠ **Bosco MacDonald**  
Bishop of Clifton

## **PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

### **VOCATIONS SUNDAY 2025**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace and peace to you on this Fourth Sunday of Easter, traditionally known as Good Shepherd Sunday. Today's Gospel (John 10:11–18) gives us those deeply consoling words of Jesus: "*I am the good shepherd... I know my own and my own know me.*"

In this Easter season and in our Jubilee Year of Hope, we hear those words not only with comfort but with conviction. We are reminded that every Christian life is born from the loving and personal call of the Shepherd who knows us by name and calls us to follow.

As we mark *Vocations Sunday* - a day of prayer and reflection on God's call in every life, we think especially of vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life, which our Church continues to need. But more deeply still, we are invited to rediscover that each one of us is called. No one is excluded from this divine summons.

This month of May marks the tenth anniversary of *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis' powerful letter to all people of goodwill, urging us to rediscover our role as stewards of the earth. That message is more urgent now than ever.

*Laudato si'* is not just an "environmental document." It is a profoundly spiritual vision of vocation. It reminds us that our relationship with God, with one another, and with the natural world is deeply interconnected. To hear God's call is also to hear the cry of the poor, and the cry of the earth. And people are listening. Across our country and our diocese, individuals, parishes, schools, charities and communities are responding. The *Guardians of Creation* project and CAFOD's *LiveSimply* programme are just two beautiful examples of faith put into action. These efforts show us that care for the planet is not some optional extra - it is a holy responsibility, a vital part of living our vocation in the world today.

The word *vocation* comes from the Latin *vocare* - to call. In the Scriptures, God's call is often quiet but persistent. Like young Samuel in the night, we may hear it only when we slow down enough to listen: "*Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.*"

Many today - especially young people - carry deep and pressing questions about direction, identity, and purpose. In an age of constant connectivity, comparison, and distraction, it's not always easy to hear the still, small voice of God. The world offers answers - often loud, immediate, and appealing - but they are frequently shallow, short-lived, and ultimately unsatisfying. Success is equated with status. Identity is confused with image. Fulfilment is promised through consumption. And yet, in the midst of this noise, Christ still speaks. His voice does not compete for attention. He does not shout above the din. But He never stops calling. He calls us into deeper life - not just to do more, but to be more. And most of all, to be His. Perhaps vocation is not primarily about what we do, it's more about who we are becoming. And that journey of becoming is not undertaken alone. Christ walks with us. He speaks our name. And He never stops calling us into the fullness of life.

And so I ask each of you, especially our younger brothers and sisters: have you asked the Lord what He is calling you to do with your life? Have you asked with an open heart? Could He be calling you to the priesthood, the diaconate, the religious life? Could He be inviting you to a deeper, more deliberate discipleship in your daily life?

Please pray with me today for vocations in our diocese - for our seminarians, for our priests and deacons, for our religious, and for all those quietly discerning. Pray too for those who live the single life with fidelity, offering their gifts in hidden and generous service.

And if you feel even the faintest whisper of a call in your own life - listen. The Shepherd is near. He knows you. And He is calling you by name.

With my prayers and blessing in this Jubilee Year of Hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bosco" with a stylized cross or initial at the start.

Rt Rev Bosco MacDonald  
Bishop of Clifton

To be read and made available in all churches and chapels on the  
Fourth Sunday of Easter  
10/11 May 2025