

## Thoughts on the Daily Word

*4<sup>th</sup> Week of Year. Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February. Readings: 1 Kings 3:4-13; Psalm: 118; Gospel: Mark 6:30-34.*

This is a story I often use about leadership or described as shepherding often in Scripture. I often go out on my bike along the riverside since I came to this parish. Two things I have become aware of during this time. One is the beauty of nature as it slowly changes over the seasons, something I have never really been around enough in the countryside to see. The second is the number of small children with two or more adults looking after them. As I hurtle along on my bike, at Olympic speeds, I wish! I watch the reaction of the carers as they see possible danger approaching their wards. As an ex-teacher it brings to mind my own sometimes scary exploits shepherding children around on the streets. Some adults are immediately aware of all the children, where they are, and what they are likely to do. They move immediately to protect them; you see it in their eyes as they look protectively to them and to me. I recognise the true shepherds immediately. Others just look at me as if stunned, leaving the children to run around. Some others just grab one child and hold on to it, leaving the others in potential danger! Shepherding or leadership comes from the heart, a real care for the other, but it is also a learnt skill, demanding attention and alertness. It can also mean sometimes putting yourself at risk to protect those in your care. This is the wisdom that Solomon seeks from God. In some ways he will succeed, in others not, as history tells us. The Gospel is the story of how to become true shepherds and that is a responsibility and mission for all of us.