

### **Thoughts on the Daily Word**

*4<sup>th</sup> Week of Year. Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February. Readings of Day: Hebrews 13:15-17,20-21; Psalm: 22; Gospel: Mark 6:30-34.*

I often go out on my bike along the riverside during lockdown. Something that I have done before but now it is my only real exercise. 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, I'm really too old to go fast! 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 mesmerised, leaving the children to run around. Some others just grab one child and hold on to it, leaving the others in danger! Shepherding 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 putting yourself at risk to protect those in your care. The Gospel is the story of becoming shepherds and that is a responsibility and mission for all of us.