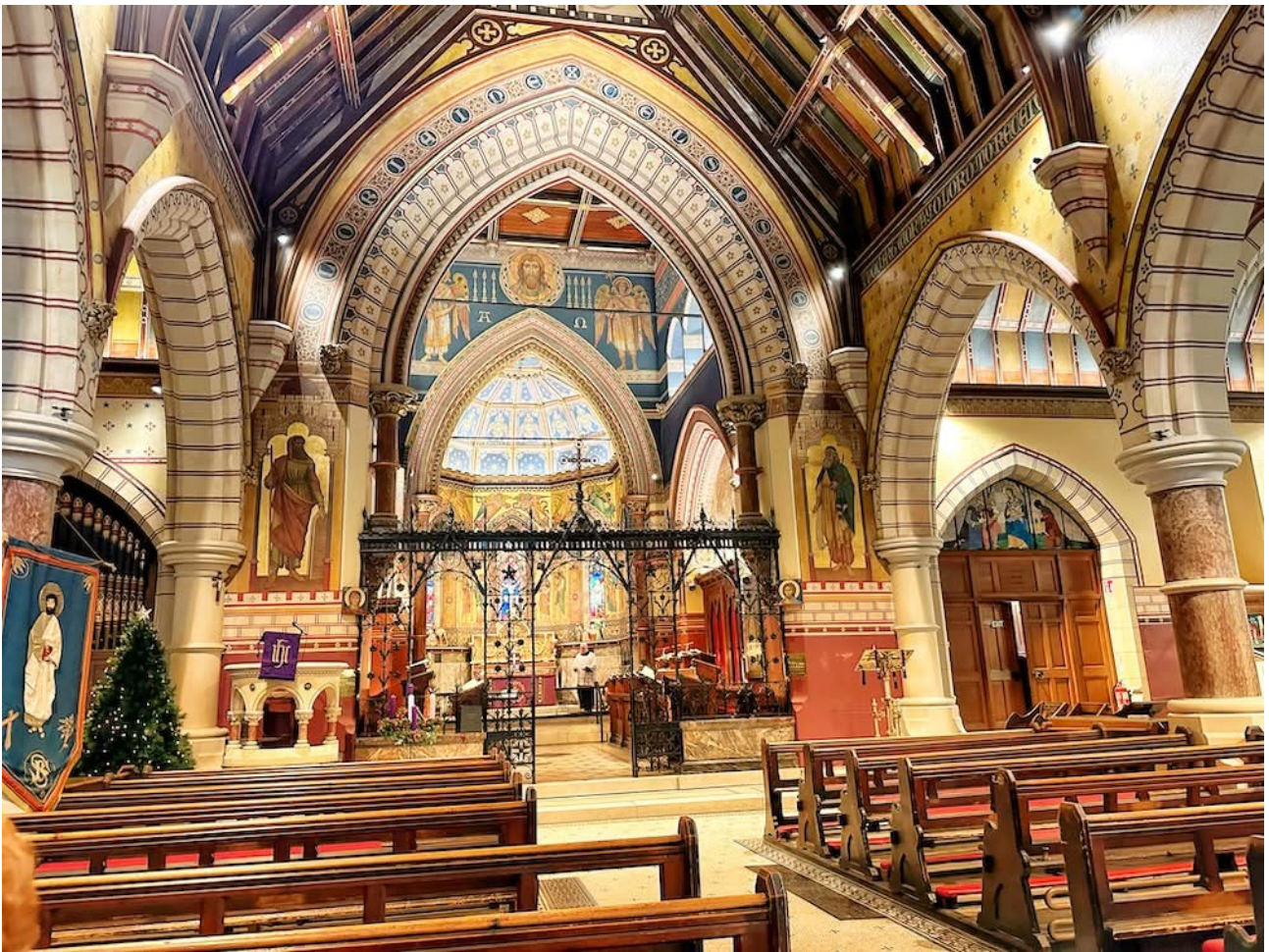


Speaking to the soul



Seeking the lost

If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. Luke 15:4-5

This is such a beautiful story. You can picture the shepherd as he makes sure the 99 precious sheep are safe and warm and then trudges out into the wilderness to look for the one that was lost. It's a heart-warming story, but it doesn't make any sense. Economically, why would you run the risk of endangering the 99 by leaving them all alone in the desert while you go out and search for just one sheep, who constitutes only 1 per cent of your business? Surely the shepherd would have been better advised to protect 99 per cent of his business and hope that the silly lost sheep would wander home.

The only explanation for a shepherd acting in this way is love. The shepherd sets out to search for the lost sheep for the pure and simple reason that he has compassion. This gives us an insight into how Jesus lived and worked. He spent a lot of time with people who everyone else considered to be lost causes. He could have spent his time comfortably in Jerusalem having interesting conversations with the educated, influential and religious people, but no, Jesus chose to go to the people who lived on the edge of society – poor people, children, women, people with leprosy, prostitutes and tax collectors. He was looking for the lost sheep.

In our churches today, we need to make sure we never stop seeking the lost sheep. It is very easy to get comfortable in church life and to shape everything we do to suit us. Jesus reminds us that we exist in his name to reach out to people who may be completely unlike us and who may have been rejected by society. When they turn to Christ and find new life in him, we should have a celebration!

QUESTION

In what way are you seeking to reach the lost?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that you have been a shepherd to me. Help me to reach out to others with your arms of love. Amen

Photo - Parish Church of St Bartholomew, Dublin

