

## FATHER, FOR I HAVE NOT SINNED

The sunlight streamed through the stained glass of St Mary's. A prism of colours danced on the floor just ahead of the altar, surrounded by a mythical circle of angels playing tambourines.

John, a young curate in training, took the right hand of Father Wills; kissed it; fell to his knees and made the sign of the cross on his chest as Christ the redeemer looked upon from a high. Father Wills lent down and offered his hand again, this time to encourage John to stand.

'I have seen the Lord's sign. It's real. I really can't believe it, but my dreams are so vivid. The priesthood is everything I have ever wanted and years of study has brought me to this point.'

'This is a big decision, John. Are you really sure this is the path for you?'

'You have doubts, Father?'

Father Wills rested his right index finger on his top lip in contemplation.

'It has been brought to my attention that you harbour, shall we say, political leanings. I rather fear that such leanings will take you as far away from your ecclesiastical calling as morally possible.'

'How so, Father?'

'I found a manifesto in the chancery. It had surely fallen from your overcoat pocket. I recognised your handwriting for it is inscribed "copy". Where did you get it?'

'I took tea with a friend who is running for Parliament. I am merely in agreement with his arguments on social injustice. Though that is all.'

'I recognise the phrasing of the printed words, John.'

'I assisted in the drafting of his manifesto, Father. I cannot deny. But that is all.'

Father Wills looked hard into John's eyes. 'John, if the scriptures have told you one thing, it is to be honest with yourself. Should your vocation be a different chosen path other than the church, the Lord shall be with you and protect you all the same. His love and devotion are unconditional.'

'Yes, Father.'

'Your favourite hymn is *Lord of All Hopefulness*. Realise the hymn is a confirmation that presents itself in everything we do in our day, John. Do not fear the decision you must make. Do not underestimate the reason why.'

'Father, the church is my family. The rectory is my home. I have peace of mind.'

'John, you are one of us and you shall remain one of us. But your calling to the Priesthood is a false prophet. You see the light that is now extending down the aisle to toward the west door?'

'Yes, of course. The sun is shining as our Earth travels.'

'So, the sunlight that rains from heaven, is yours. Do not resist for you are blessed in taking the Lord's message with you. Hold the message dear as you step out into the world.'

'Oh Father, have I let you down? For I have not sinned.'

'No John. You have awoken and the enlightenment is yours. Farewell young messenger.'