

GOSPEL*John 10:1-10*

Jesus said: 'I tell you most solemnly, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold through the gate, but gets in some other way is a thief and a brigand. The one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the flock; the gatekeeper lets him in, the sheep hear his voice, one by one he calls his own sheep and leads them out. When he has brought out his flock, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow because they know his voice. They never follow a stranger but run away from him: they do not recognise the voice of strangers.'

Jesus told them this parable but they failed to understand what he meant by telling it to them.

So Jesus spoke to them again:

'I tell you most solemnly,

I am the gate of the sheepfold.

All others who have come
are thieves and brigands;

but the sheep took no notice of them.

I am the gate.

Anyone who enters through me will be safe:

he will go freely in and out

and be sure of finding pasture.

The thief comes

only to steal and kill and destroy.

I have come

so that they may have life

and have it to the full.'

REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS*3 May 2020*

The fourth Sunday of Easter, which we celebrate today, is dedicated to Jesus the Good Shepherd. The Gospel says that: "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (Jn 10:3). The Lord calls us by name, He calls us because he loves us. However, the Gospel says, there are other voices, that are not to be followed: those of strangers, thieves and brigands who mean harm to the sheep.

These different voices resonate within us. There is the voice of God, who speaks kindly to the conscience, and there is the tempting voice that leads to evil. How can we recognise the voice of the Good Shepherd from that of the thief, how can we distinguish the inspiration of God from the suggestion of the evil

one? One can learn to discern these two voices: they speak two different languages, that is, they have opposite ways of knocking on [the door of] our hearts. They speak different languages. Just as we know how to distinguish one language from another, we can also distinguish the voice of God from the voice of the evil one.

The voice of God never forces us: God proposes himself, He does not impose himself. Instead, the evil voice seduces, assails, forces: it arouses dazzling illusions, emotions that are tempting but transient. At first it flatters, it makes us believe that we are all-powerful, but then it leaves us empty inside and accuses us: "You are worth nothing". The voice of God, instead, corrects us, with great patience, but always encourages us, consoles us: it always nourishes hope. God's voice is a voice that has a horizon, whereas the voice of the evil one leads you to a wall, it backs you into a corner.

Another difference: the voice of the enemy distracts us from the present and wants us to focus on fears of the future or sadness about the past — the enemy does not want the present — it brings to surface the bitterness, the memories of the wrongs suffered, of those who have hurt us, ... many bad memories. On the other hand, the voice of God speaks in the present: "Now you can do good, now you can exercise the creativity of love, now you can forego the regrets and remorse that hold your heart captive". It inspires us, it leads us ahead, but it speaks in the present: now.

Again: the two voices raise different questions in us. The one that comes from God will be: "What is good for me?". Instead the tempter will insist on another question: "What do I feel like doing?". What do I feel: the evil voice always revolves around the ego, its impulses, its needs, everything straight away. It is like a child's tantrums: everything, and now. The voice of God, however, never promises joy at a low price: it invites us to go beyond our ego in order to find the true, good peace. Let us remember: evil never brings peace. First it causes frenzy, and then it leaves bitterness. This is the style of evil.

continued over page ►

Lastly, God's voice and that of the tempter, speak in different "environments": the enemy prefers darkness, falsehood, and gossip; the Lord loves sunlight, truth, and sincere transparency. The enemy will say to us: "Close yourself up in yourself, besides no one understands and listens to you, do not be trusting!" Goodness, on the contrary, invites us to open up, to be clear and trusting in God and in others. Dear brothers and sisters, during this time many thoughts and worries lead us to turn inwards into ourselves. Let us pay attention to the voices that reach our hearts. Let us ask ourselves where they come from. Let us ask for the grace to recognise and follow the voice of the Good Shepherd, who brings us out of the enclosures of selfishness and leads us to the pastures of true freedom. May Our Lady, Mother of Good Counsel, guide and accompany our discernment.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does Jesus mean when he says that the sheep recognise the voice of the shepherd, and how does this image help us understand the relationship he desires with his followers?



Heart: Many voices compete for our attention in daily life. What helps you recognise when a voice, thought, or desire is leading you closer to God rather than away from him?



Hands: What practices in your life help you listen more attentively to the voice of the Good Shepherd — and how might you create more space for that listening this week?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.