

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 25th, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. All of the readings have to do with Christ, our Shepherd, and He is the Good Shepherd. It is one of the shortest Gospels of the year that we read today but it is full of meaning, it is filled with challenge and it is filled with questions about whether we are truly disciples. Jesus today talks about what it means to be one of His sheep, one of His lambs. He says, "My sheep hear My voice. I know them know and they follow Me." So that is the first thing. And then He makes a promise, "And I will give them eternal life and no one will snatch them out of My hand." So before we get the promise we have got to be make sure we are a sheep. Not everyone who goes church, not everyone who is a priest, not everyone who is a nun, not everyone who sings all kinds of happy songs, means that you are truly a sheep of the Shepherd. He tells us today what a sheep is, one of His sheep. It is one who hears His voice, who He knows and who follows Him. Now again that is much different than going to Mass now isn't it. To hear His voice means we have to have this gift of discernment that we can discern Christ's voice from that of the world, the flesh or the devil. Everyone here listens to the voice of the world every day. Every time you turn on what -the TV. That is the voice of the world coming at you. A lot of us have our own special programs that we watch, but we listen to the voice of the world every day. We listen to the voice of our flesh every time we are hungry, we are lustful, when we want something, there is that voice in the flesh of us inside.

Then there is the devil. When the devil tempts us, oppresses us, or God forbid, possesses us. Which I don't think there are many her that are possessed, even though I have had some questions about a couple of you for awhile. But anyway that all of us have those three voices that are speaking to us at all times. But Jesus says the sheep are the one who hear His voice. Now to hear the voice of God what do you think you have got to do? Listen, yes. But, where do you listen at? Prayer. And then He gives us His word and that means we have got to spend time with Him to hear His voice. Now again everybody here, well most people here, read the paper every day. And if you read the paper every day you are reading the bad news. It is all bad. There is nothing good in the paper. It is all bad news. You know this one got killed. That one got killed. That one got killed. That one got robbed. This one is doing that. It is all bad news. And yet every morning will sit there and pick the paper and we will read the bad news. And then we wonder why we get crazy. We wonder why we get depressed. We wonder why we have a negative attitude towards life. Because, you are listening to the wrong people. You are listening to the world. You are listening to the flesh. You are listening to the devil.

What you and I must do is we need to discipline ourselves to listen to the Shepherd. Hear My voice means people that, thousands and literally thousands of times I have talked about this, we must be people who read His word every day. We must. It is not an option. It is not one of those things you can pick and chose from what Fr. Larry is teaching. He drives me crazy. He always tells you got to do this. I can do that. No you can't. Jesus said you need to hear His voice. He gives you His word to hear His voice. He says My sheep hear My voice. Do you hear the voice of the Shepherd every day. Do you go to Him in the word and listen to Him or do you go to the world, the flesh, and the devil? I am here to tell you even though you are real holy when you come in here, if you are not listening to the voice of the Shepherd you are not a sheep of the Shepherd. That is what I am saying because that is what Christ is saying.

So the challenge is if in your heart of heart today and say I don't read the Bible, guess what you have to start doing, reading the Bible. How often, every day to listen to the voice of the Shepherd. If you read the paper every day there is no excuse. None, I don't want to hear it. There is absolutely no excuse not to read the Bible if you read the paper every day. None. It is you saying the bad news has more priority over the Good News. It is time to change. So we listen to Him. So that means we read the Bible and we pray when we're reading the Bible. Just don't read the Bible like a novel. We read the Bible to encounter and listen to His voice. Because He says My sheep hear My voice. I know them. And the only way to get to know anybody is by spending time with somebody. So if you are spending time with Christ, He knows you. So when the time comes it is no big deal. He knows you. You have been with Him every day. It is no big thing.

And then they follow Me. And that is where it comes down to it. Once we hear the voice of God the hard part is putting it into action. The number one thing He tells us of course is to love each another, to give up our lives for one another every day in love. So I want you to take your life, compare it to what I just said. Do you listen to His voice every day by praying and reading the Word of God? Does He know you because you spend more time with Him than the TV box? Do you sit there and do you follow Him by obeying what He tells you? And again if not, this is just a little kick in the butt to tell you okay then you must start so you can really be a sheep of the Shepherd. But then if you and I do this and it is a challenge for all of us, not just you. I need a kick to be sure I am doing this. He makes you a promise that if you do these things. The world doesn't give you any kind of promise except it is going to bring you depression. It is going to bring you death. And it is going to pull you down. That is the promise of the world. The promise of Jesus is if we take time to pray with Him, listen to His word, get Him to know us, and to truly follow Him, He will give us eternal life. Jesus is not a liar. That is a promise. He will give us eternal life. Then He says, "And no one will snatch them from My hand. Isn't that an amazing comfort? That no matter what the world, the flesh, the devil, no matter what that people come against us, Jesus says that no one will be able to take us from Him. No one. That we can have that assurance that when I am a person who really spends time with Him, who really listens to His word and follows in His way, no one can take me from Him. That He looks at every body and Jesus Christ looks at the world, the flesh and the devil and He says, "You have got to go through Me before you touch one of My sheep. You have got to go through Me." And He is the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords.

So that should give us all great comfort. That Jesus will give us eternal life and no one will be able to take us from Him. But, to get that benefit we got to truly be one of His sheep. And to be one of His sheep we have to hear His voice, He has got to know us, and we have to follow Him. You got it? Get it? Going to do it? Please!!! May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.