

May 7th, 2018
4th Sunday of Easter - Cycle A
Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning and how are you?

Today we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday and we talk about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. At the end of the gospel, Jesus tells us that He came to give us life, an abundant life. But how do we get to that life because often in our own lives, we do not feel that abundant life that God wants to give us? And I think it comes back to what He says right in the beginning of the gospel when it talks about My sheep hear My voice, I call them by name and lead them. So the way we get abundant life is through our prayer life and our prayer life, as we've said many times before cannot just be a bunch of words that we say to God, you know like C.S. Lewis, I read this week says, a parrot can say memorized words so those who pray or he says seemingly pray, just by saying a bunch of memorized words do nothing more than what a parrot does. So he calls us not to be parrots and how we come not to be a parrot, but enter into relationship, is we need to do three things, I believe, to help us listen and hear the voice of God. So he can hear us when He calls, we can hear Him when He calls our name and He can lead us and first, I think, the thing we need to do is, I'll give you all three and we will go back to them is we need to carve time out in our prayer, to carve time out specifically to listen. So whatever prayer we're doing now, it's good but we need to carve certain time just to put aside for listening.

The second thing that we need to do to hear His voice is in our prayer time, we need to create silence, not just exterior silence but interior silence and third thing we need to do is to be attentive to Jesus. So let's break that up a little, huh?

The first thing we need to do is carve out time. You know the Word of God says in Proverbs, my people die because of lack of discipline. And prayer is a discipline in our life. It just needs to be. So we most of us, I would image, are pretty disciplined in our prayer that we have prayer every day. But we need to make sure that in our prayer that we carve out 3 to 5 minutes of silence. That way, we can enter into relationship. We can hear His voice. We can hear His voice, we can hear Him call our name and we can hear Him lead us as the shepherd does. So the first thing I would encourage you to do is to carve out time that you specifically do. So if you spend 5 or 10 minutes a day now in prayer, spend another 3 minutes in silence and say "God, I am here to listen to You". Okay? So you carve out the time.

The second thing you gotta do is make sure your silent during that time. Now it's not just external silence, but most of us aren't used to silence. We're uncomfortable with silence, huh? First thing you do when you get in the car is you do what? Turn on the radio. Right? And sometimes you know, when I drive, like tonight I gotta drive to Pittsburg for two hours to get a flight in the morning, well I'll turn the radio off just so I can talk to the Lord. 'Cause it's a great time to listen to the Lord when you have two hours and after a while, you're talked out right? And then it's "Okay Lord, what do you want to say?" So you have to carve time in listening. So you need silence around you but you need silence within you.

Because often though, I'm here in silence with the Lord every day, I'm not silent in my heart. I'm looking at all the fears, I'm looking at all the things I gotta do, I'm looking at all these things in my life that keep me busy, that I worry about, that I go crazy over, and I gotta let my heart be silent to be still so that the Lord can, so I can hear the Lord when He speaks to me. So after you've carved out time, you need to create silence in that time, exterior silence, interior silence, so you can hear the voice of God.

The last thing I think you need to do is to be attentive because again we can be very distracted in our prayer if we are just saying words, but when we're attentive, that means we're focused on Jesus, not ourselves, not our situation, we're attentive to looking at Jesus. And that way, Jesus can speak to us, huh? Because, again, you know, when I was in the seminary, I wrote a paper on prayer for one of my spirituality courses, and the whole paper was just on the light burning in the Sanctuary. So, you know, if you look here at our big Sanctuary candle, that light is always attentive to Jesus, if you will. It just burns, and it focuses on the reality of Christ's presence, any church you go to throughout the world, if you see a Sanctuary Light with the candle burning, you know Jesus is present. So that we become this Sanctuary Light when we pray.

Focusing on Jesus, during our prayer time. And when you and I can focus on Him, then we will hear Him say our name. It would be interesting to find out that if you ever heard God say your name in prayer. And if the answer in your heart is "No, Father, I've never done that, I've never heard that", that's 'cause we need to be silent. So I encourage you, if you want to hear the voice of God, and He'll say your name, that you have that silence, so you build time for it, you create

the silence and then your attentive., and then, He will not only say your name, He'll tell you what he wants of you. He's our Sheppard, we're the sheep, He'll always lead us and when He leads us, He leads us to this abundant life. That's what Jesus leads us to. That's what He says and I don't think Christ is a liar. But we need to do our part to listen. So I encourage you, in your daily prayer, carve out time for silence, to be with the Lord. Create silence, exterior, and interior and then just be attentive to Jesus. What do you want of me Lord? And then listen and He will speak to you, He will say your name, and He will lead you. You got it? Get it? Gonna do it? May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.