

May 3, 2020 - Fourth Sunday of Easter

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. And again, so as I talked about at the very beginning, this is Good Shepherd Sunday. And what does that mean? That we follow the Shepherd. Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. And He calls us to do a couple things today. One, be grateful; two, listen; and three, live life abundantly. Huh? If we listen to the second reading, we hear about what Jesus does for us, right? In the second reading, it talks about in the Letter of Peter that He was wounded for our sins and by His wounds we have been healed. That again, it's what Jesus Christ has done for us. This Good Shepherd, you know, usually the shepherd takes care of the sheep long enough to eat them, right? Mmm. But not the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd instead of eating the sheep, DIES for the sheep. And takes care of the sheep, even costing Him His life. The sheep are not, the Shepherd, the sheep are not for the Shepherd, the Shepherd is for the sheep. Here. He exists to take care of you. So the first thing that you need to do is just be grateful. You know, again, people sit there and say, "What do I have to be grateful for, Father? Are you kidding me? Look at all the stuff going on around me. There's people dying. There's people sick. I can't get a job. I'm not working. What are you grateful for? What can I be grateful for?" That no matter what, you can be grateful that Jesus Christ left Heaven, took your sins upon Himself and died upon the cross, so that you will live forever. What do you have to be grateful for? You have EVERYTHING to be grateful for. Jesus Christ loved you so much, that He died for you. That's the Shepherd that we have. No matter what, we can always be grateful for that.

The second thing, as it talks about, again and again in here, right, that "My sheep hear my voice," that they listen to Me, they recognize My voice. They don't follow other people because they don't recognize his voice, but My sheep know My voice. And that means that we need to listen. You know again it's Good Shepherd, I wear this, it's a symbol of this was my ordination, my first mass vestment my mother bought for me. It says "Feed My Sheep" on it and here is the lamb, the Shepherd holding the little lamb. And again, it's to remind us and like I'll do again at mass today, like I do at every mass, throughout all my priesthood, is I'll sit there and I'll say, "Okay, close your eyes. Be still. Ask Jesus to hold you. Put your head on His chest and listen to His heart beat." Don't you get it? His heart beat is His voice. It's God speaking to you. And what's He speaking to you? "You are loved." You ever know that you didn't have to be created, as we've talked about before. He wanted you to exist and He didn't just want you to exist for this little time on Earth, He wants you to exist forever, with Him. He created you to be loved forever. But you need to listen to His voice. We listen to the voice of the world, the flesh and the devil every day. You need to listen to His voice. And again, you'll get that by reading Scripture every day. No Bible, no breakfast; no Bible no bed. And then, by also sitting there and being silent, being still, letting Jesus hold you every day, putting your head on His chest every day, listening to His heart beat every day. And not only will He say He loves you, but it says what? "I call them by name." He knows your name. And He calls your name every day. Have you in your own prayer life ever heard God say your name? I submit to you, until you've really listened to God, and heard Him say your name, you're kind of just going through the motions. The only way that's going to happen is if you become still and listen to Him. You have a whole day to listen to

Him today, don't you? "Oh Father, I've got plans." Okay. Take your plans. Take an hour and spend time listening to God. Until you hear His voice, you're just going through the motions. He wants you to live life abundantly, right? And that's what this next line is.

The last line, John 10:10, "I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly." Are you and I living abundant lives? We live abundant lives when we're focused on God and we're focused on His love. When we know that we're loved, 'cause the deepest need in all of our hearts is what? To be loved. And so when that deepest need is taken care of, when I know that I know that I know that I'm loved, then I live life fully. And I don't live a life fully for me, I live it for Him. Again, as I was talking about for Good Friday and that, huh, you're walking across the street, the car driving a hundred miles an hour, you stop in the middle of the street and go "Aaagh!" and someone pushes you out of the way and then they die and you live. For the rest of your life, you will live every day, abundantly, to honor the person who died to give you life. Would you not? Would you not tell everybody that you should be dead? But someone else died for you so that you could live. Would you not honor this person every day and not waste one moment of your life in honor of this person who loved you and gave his life for you? This is the kind of Shepherd we celebrate today. A Shepherd who loves you and gave His life for you. So today be grateful, today listen and today, and all the days of your life, live life abundantly, for love of Him who gave everything for love of you. Got it? Get it? Gonna do it? May each of you know His love, today and forever, Amen.