

Do We Hear Jesus' Voice?

Acts 13: 14, 43-52; Ps. 100; Rev. 7: 9, 14b-17; Jn. 10: 27-30

When we are sitting in a quiet room listening to some music recordings, we can often name the singer just by hearing their voice. The characteristics of their voice give them away: the roughness, the mellowness, the pitch, the loudness. We instantly recognize who the singer is. But sometimes, we can hear the same song in a shopping mall and not recognize the singer or even the song because of the competing noise and distractions.

Jesus says: 'My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.' He invokes the image of the Good Shepherd caring for His flock. We are followers of Christ. We are Christians. When Jesus says that we 'hear' His voice, it means not only that we listen and recognize Him, but also that we do what He tells us to do.

Jesus implies that He has a unique and individual relationship with each one of us when He says: 'I know them'. It is a deeply spiritual and intimate relationship. As St. Augustine put it: 'God loves each of us, as if there were only one of us.'

And, most of all, Jesus offers us eternal life. Even though we die to life in this world, He tells us that our life will go on for eternity in heaven.

However, in the same way that we can fail to recognize a song due to competing noise, we can lose Jesus' voice in the busy-ness of our lives; all the aspects of daily life that can distract us and cause us not to hear Jesus' message. We may be like sheep that wander away from the flock and are in danger of being eaten by the wolf. When that happens, Jesus said that He would leave the rest of the flock and search for the one lost sheep. Because of His loving relationship with the sheep, He will not allow any of them to be snatched out of His hand.

When we wander away from Jesus and can no longer recognize His voice because we are distracted by our work, our recreation, our phones, computers, and TVs, He searches for us. But unlike the shepherd herding the wayward sheep back to the flock, Jesus does not force us to return. Instead, He makes Himself readily available to us when we are ready to listen to Him in the quiet. He is there in the Eucharist, in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle or the monstrance, and in the confessional.

When we leave the noise of the world behind and enter into the quiet with Jesus, He speaks to us gently in a voice that we instantly recognize. He reminds us of His teachings so that our lives can be filled with peace and joy regardless of the circumstances. Let us not be like the Jewish leaders of Antioch who rejected the Good News, but believe in Him who offers us life everlasting.