

# Good Shepherd Sunday

Homily: Fr. Shijo George

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“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish,”

We hear this affirmation from Jesus the Shepherd, who is also the Lamb. The gist of today’s Gospel passage is that Jesus, the Shepherd, tends the sheep and surrenders His own life for the sheep, thus becoming the Lamb who died for human salvation. In the Book of Revelation, about the Lamb and His followers, it is written that the followers of the Lamb, who is Jesus, the Shepherd, were privileged to wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. This brings great benefits to the people who followed the Lamb: no hunger nor thirst, and protection from all evils. The Shepherd guides them to the spring of the water of life and their tears are wiped away. Spiritual communion and companionship are formed between the Lamb and His followers.

Listening and hearing the voice of the Shepherd is very crucial in following Him. If the sheep is not ready to listen or keeps itself away from the Shepherd, there is a high chance of getting lost. Only if it listens to the voice of the Shepherd can it follow the Shepherd. ‘Not listening’ can easily make the sheep go astray on its own way, wandering aimlessly around, and finally getting lost in difficult situations.

I know of a game in which mothers and toddlers participate. The objective of the game is for the mothers to find their own kids. The mothers are separated from their children and blindfolded with a cloth. When the game begins, the mothers must find their child by listening and recognizing the voice of their child, touching the child before removing their blindfold. Most of the mothers win the game because they recognize their children’s voice. Some mothers fail because they don’t recognize their children’s voice. This probably happens to those mothers who rarely spend time with their children because of one reason or another: lack of time or having helpers take care of their children.



Like the game, to discern the voice of Christ and to recognize Him from amid all the distractions of life, we should strive to listen to Him always: listening to Him in our daily lives, through our prayer life, through the reading of scripture, in the celebration of the Sacraments, through our brothers and sisters, and through all the events and happenings in our lives. God speaks to us in many different ways. The only thing we need to do is to listen, recognize, and follow Him.

I was moved and touched by the first address of Pope Leo XIV as he greeted the people in St. Peter's Square after his pontifical election. His first words to the world were: "Peace be with you all! Beloved brothers and sisters, this is the first greeting of the Risen Christ, the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for God. I, too, would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families, to all people, wherever they may be, to all peoples, to all the earth. May peace be with you." And it is important that the life we have in this world needs the Peace from Jesus the Shepherd. He continued, "God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail. We are all in God's hands. Therefore, without fear, united, hand in hand with God and with each other, let us go forward. We are disciples of Christ, Christ walks ahead of us, and the world needs His light. Humanity needs Him as the bridge to be reached by God and His love." The theme that prevailed in his speech is that Jesus the Shepherd leads the people.

To hear and follow the Shepherd is the foremost thing we should do, and to be in the company and in a relationship with Jesus. As Jesus said, the Father and I are one; and so Jesus invites all of us to be one with Him, a union with Jesus and His Father always. It is a relationship of love, trust, and obedience to God's Will. This happens and is achieved through our life of faith and prayer. This gives us strength and direction even amid our difficulties and struggles. Let us trust in our Lord, the Shepherd, and pray with the Psalmist:

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;  
for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me."