



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. Every year on the fourth Sunday of Easter, the Gospel is from John 10, Jesus speaking about the Good Shepherd. In the Gospel today, Jesus says that the sheep follow the shepherd "because they recognize his voice" (John 10:4). So let's follow the analogy. Jesus is the shepherd. We are the sheep. We follow Him (not strangers) because we recognize His voice. So ... does Jesus speak to you?

It's an odd thing that in our world, when we talk to Jesus it's called prayer, but when Jesus talks to us it's called schizophrenia. Do we believe that Jesus really speaks to us? It would seem that Jesus is telling us that He does. Certainly, He speaks to us through the Sacred Scriptures and through the Sacred Tradition of the Church (please note that Sacred Tradition is that which we believe is inspired by the Holy Spirit, passed down by the Apostles, and is a matter of faith or morals ... as opposed to tradition [little "t"] which is "the way we do things"). But, it would seem that Jesus is saying that He also speaks to each of us.

So the question again: does Jesus speak to you?

I would submit to you that *He does speak to you*. Jesus, I believe, is constantly speaking to us in our hearts. The question is whether we are quiet enough to hear Him speak? Jesus doesn't shout; He whispers. St. Mother Teresa said,

The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service and the fruit of service is peace. (A *Simple Path*)

At the heart of all prayer is silence. This is both external and internal silence. We need to step away from our devices, our noisemakers, all the things that distract us from ourselves, and spend time in silence with Jesus. You see, as we spend that time in silence, we begin to attune our ears to the voice of the Shepherd.

I have found over the years – waxing and waning – that I can hear the voice of Jesus. This voice is not an audible voice in my ears, but it is a voice in my heart. As I listen more attentively, I become more accustomed to that voice, and I can tell when it is Jesus and when it is myself (or sometime "the other guy").

Does this seem odd or something only for the saints, but not the ordinary Christian? I would submit to you that each Christian, by the very fact of his or her baptism, is called to be a saint. Each Christian is a child of God. Since a good father speaks to his children, wouldn't it follow that *the Good Father* speaks to us, His children? He does because He loves us.

I invite you today, take some time in silence. Shut off the TV and radio. Step away from all the devices. Find a place to be alone with The Alone, and let silence wash over you. You may only be able to take a minute or two at first (yup, it can be boring!), but as you learn how to be in silence with God, you will learn to embrace the silence, and have a deeper and deeper communion with God in your heart. You will even begin to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd. His voice is a voice of peace, of love, of compassion. Even when He needs to correct us, it is always one of a loving Father calling us to Himself.

I pray that you come to recognize the gentle voice of the Shepherd, calling you home to His Heart.