

Fourth Sunday of Easter (C)

Gospel text (Jn 10:27-30): Jesus said: “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

“My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me”

Fr. Josep LAPLANA OSB Monk of Montserrat
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Today, Jesus' gaze over manhood is that of the Good Shepherd, who accepts under his responsibility the sheep that are given to him by the Father and takes good care of each one of them. Between him and them He creates a link, a recognition and faithfulness instinct: “My sheep hear my voice; I know them and they follow me” (Jn 10:27). The Good Shepherd's voice is always an invitation to follow him, to enter his magnetic circle of influence.

Christ has won our hearts not only through his examples and his doctrine, but also with the awful price He had to pay of his Divine Blood. He tremendously suffered for all of us, and therefore, He does not want to lose anyone of us. And yet, the evidence is clear: some do follow the Good Shepherd's call while others, do not. Some react with anger at the announcement of the Gospel while others jump with joy at the news. What do the latter have the former do not? Saint Augustine, before the vast mystery of the divine election, used to answer: «God does not leave you, if you do not leave him»; He will not forsake you if you do not forsake him. Do not therefore put the blame on God, or the Church or on others, because you are the only one to blame for, the problem of your faithfulness being only yours. God does not deny anyone his grace, and this is precisely our strength: strongly stick to God's grace. It is no merit of ours; we have simply been “blessed”.

Faith enter us through the ears, by listening to he Word of the Lord, and the greater risk we run is our own deafness, to miss the Good Shepherd's voice, because our head is full of noise and other dissonant voices. Or even worse, what in Saint Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises is named as “to turn a deaf ear”, to know God is

calling you and pretend not to hear it. He who consciously and repeatedly closes his ears to God's call, is no longer in tune with Jesus and will also lose the joy of being a Christian, to go grazing in other pastures that neither satiate nor give eternal life. Nonetheless, He is the only one who could have said: "I give them eternal life." (Jn 10:28).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"'If anyone enters through me, he will be saved', and he will come in and he will go out and find pasture. He will come in coming to faith; he will come out from faith to face-to-face vision, he will find there to graze eternity pasture." (Saint Gregory the Great)

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"Herein lies the distinction between the owner, the true Shepherd, and the robber. For the robber, for the ideologues and the dictators, human beings are merely a thing that they possess. For the true Shepherd, however, they are free in relation to truth and Love." (Benedict XVI)

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"Participation in the communal celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his Church. The faithful give witness by this to their communion in faith and charity (...). They strengthen one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 2182)