

Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Easter  
3 May 2020  
Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish

***Good Shepherd Sunday***

**“The merciful love of the Lord fills the earth; by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, alleluia.**

Reading 1 – Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Psalm 23 – **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing that I shall want.**

Reading 2 – 1 Peter 2:20b-25

Gospel – John 10:1-10

**Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we arrive at the Fourth Sunday of the Easter Season. We continue in these days to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord and the light of Christ that illuminates our world. On this fourth Sunday of Easter, known as Good Shepherd Sunday, because the readings for this Sunday - in Cycles A, B and C - all have to do with Jesus being the good shepherd. We hear about how the sheep come to follow their shepherd because they recognize his voice. Do we recognize the voice of our shepherd? Can we pick his voice from the many other voices in our world that try to get us to follow them?

Last week we encountered the Gospel story of the disciples and their encounter with Jesus while they were on the road to Emmaus. Since Easter, Jesus has been revealing himself again and again to the disciples. He is reassuring them and helping to calm their fears. For a time now, people had been listening to Jesus teach and preach and they saw that he had healed many people. Many people started to follow him, but when he was presented before Pilate and then was

crucified and died, the disciples did not know what to think. They had been involved in this movement and Jesus was leading them. Now, he was dead, and they could not find his body. The disciples thought that maybe the guards had taken the body. The guards thought that the disciples had taken the body somehow. They were lost and confused. Jesus came to reassure them and to let them know that everything that he had taught them was true. With the disciples on the road to Emmaus, he recounted to the disciples everything in the scriptures that referred to him (remember scriptures at this time meant the Old Testament). He showed himself to them so that they would continue to have faith and believe and so that they would be able to keep going on the path. But in order for the disciples to be able to keep on the right path, they needed to make sure that they recognize his voice.

How do we come to recognize the voice of Jesus? How do we come to recognize his voice over other voices that might come and try to lead us down the wrong path? Our world is filled with voices that want us to follow them and go down the path that they lead us on, which is not the path that our God wants us to follow. In order for us to know the voice of our shepherd, we have to spend time with him. We have to learn what his voice sounds like. We do that by listening. How often do you stop in your day to listen the voice of Jesus? The only way that we can come to know his voice is by spending time with Jesus. Spending time in prayer, in reading the scriptures, going to Mass (when that is available), participating in the sacraments, listening to the teachings of the church, listening to our shepherds that are in our world today in the place of Jesus, the Pope, the Bishops, the priests.

Our Church is a place where we often find the voice of our shepherd. Sometimes, however, we have a tendency to think that we know more than the Pope, Bishops and priests. That somehow, they got it wrong, yet at the same time we will listen without a second thought to the “truth” that is poured out over the internet. Even with the situation with COVID-19, it can be hard to know what is true because there is so much false news out there that it is scary. There are so many people that have agendas other than the good of the people. How can we ever know what is right or wrong, what is true and false? I continue to be amazed at how people will blindly accept the testimony of people they don't even know and yet we will NOT accept the teachings of Jesus when there are so many witnesses and testimonies, not only in our scriptures, but in accounts that continue today, where the Good Shepherd is leading and guiding and continuing to reveal himself to us.

How have we been using this time since we have been asked to stay at home whenever possible to help contain the spread of this virus that has no cure? Have we used this time to grow in our relationship with Jesus and to learn to be able to hear and recognize his voice? So often in our lives we are just so busy, with work, school, shopping, family commitments, extra-curricular activities, we are always busy, busy, busy that we don't have time to focus on what is important - the things that come from above, the things of heaven. The things of the earth have been paused, so that we do have time now to focus on what really matters. What matters is Jesus and the life that he wants us to have. Yet, we can only attain that life by learning his voice, so that we can follow it and he can keep us safe. May we learn the voice of our shepherd and follow it, because he will indeed always lead us to greener pastures.