

“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” Words from our Gospel today from the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel according to St. John – sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

Doug’s room was never the tidiest and his mother was always getting on his case to clean his room. Doug, however, realized she was getting serious about straightening up his room once and for all, when he found out that she was learning to drive a bulldozer for work... Mother to her son: “I’m warning you. If you fall out of that tree and break both your legs, don’t come running to me...” When Erin’s mother knit her 3 socks instead of the usual pair, she knew that she was growing up too fast. Trying to explain this to her friend, she exclaimed, “Mom gave me an extra sock this year because I grew another foot...” Sunday school teacher: “Tell me, Cindy. Do you say prayers before eating?” Cindy: “No, ma’am, I don’t have to. My mom’s a good cook...” Whether it’s teaching us how to care for ourselves or making sure we’re well-dressed and fed, and everything in between, our mothers always have a way of taking care of us. Becoming a mother gives a whole new depth of meaning to life. Our children change us, challenge us, transform us, depress us, motivate us, and fill us joy and gratitude. They determine what we read, who we know, how we spend our weekends... They are who we live for and they affect us in every way.

As I was reading through the Gospel, I thought it might be good for us to read the Gospel through the eyes of a mother. Indeed, it seemed almost as if Jesus’ declaration and prayer for his flock as the Good Shepherd, which we heard is borne out of the tenderness of a mother’s heart. I’m going to re-read the Gospel with some edits, it’s a short one, and I would invite you to imagine that it is our mother’s prayer for each of us... Their prayer, like the prayer from the lips of Jesus in the Gospel, might be said thus,

“My sheep, my children, hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.  
I give them ... life, and they shall not perish.  
No one can take them out of my hand.  
God, who has given them to me, is greater than all,  
and no one can take them out of the God’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

What a wonderful sentiment expressing a mother's great love for us. Indeed, our moms know us through and through, and we as their children cling to them, and follow their voice. We see this in ducklings who follow their mother; we see this in a child who hides behind her mother's skirt, we see this in the college student who calls up Mom for help with laundry, or the newly married couple who has kids of their own looking for advice; we see this in the son who holds his hand at his elder mother's bedside in the twilight of life. We follow the voice of the mother because they know us above all else. There is the sentiment of being cared for by the hands of a mother, but an even greater knowledge that in God's hands, no one can touch their children and they will be kept safe and protected. There is the expression of unity with God, which would be echoed in wholesome relationships and peace that comes from that, and the gratefulness for the gift of life that God has bestowed, wanting their children to have it fully, completely, to the full. They have completely dedicated themselves to always wanting what is best for us, much like the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ himself.

We will never know or appreciate enough all of the sacrifices that our mothers have made throughout our lives, themselves following in the example of the Paschal mystery of Christ. It is the very definition of love. Though it is not always easy, what a wonderful and sacred vocation it is to care for another with a mother's love, to choose life and to put the welfare of their kids before their own; it is unfortunate that this vocation is more and more being taken for granted, threatened, and as you see on the news even rejected in our own society, so let us show our deep appreciation for our Moms as we celebrate Mother's Day this weekend. Indeed, we owe so much to our Moms, and I should like to think the greatest honor we could give to our mothers in return, would be to imitate them in showing our loving care for others, just as we have been cared for by our moms. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, the giving of love is an education of itself. May we follow in their good example, and follow in the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus and our Mother, allowing their love to touch and transform our lives. Thus, may we be, in the discipleship that we live, the answer to their prayers and the prayer of Jesus, and truly become the kind of persons that know because of our mothers how to care for one another after the love of God himself.