

**FATHER MARK SCHULTE**  
**HOMILY**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A)**  
**APRIL 26, 2026**

**“Familiar Sounds”**

My Brothers and Sisters, there are many sounds that are very familiar to us such as our favorite songs. We could be anywhere when a certain song is played and we would know exactly what it is and whoever plays or sings it. If our eyes were closed we would recognize the sound of sea waves crashing on the shore, water gurgling over rocks in a stream, birds and their different calls, the sound of thunder in a storm, or wind blowing through the trees. Recordings are often made of these natural sounds, and we play them over and over because to hear them brings us a certain amount of peace.

The voices of family and relatives are etched into our memory. We would recognize their voice immediately even if they have been dead for many years. You know the sound of your dog’s bark, if it is a playful bark or an angry bark. A cow recognizes the sound of its newborn calf from all the other calves.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus uses this concept of the familiarity of sounds to make his point (Jn 10:1-10). He said the sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd and when he calls them out of the sheepfold they follow him immediately. A sheepfold is a gathering together of many different flocks into a place where they have protection at night. Each flock in that sheepfold has its own shepherd or master. And even though they are mingled together they will separate themselves from all the others when they are called by their owner. They recognize the sound of his individual voice. Years ago there used to be something called a “hog calling contest”, based upon how quickly the hogs responded to the call of their owners. (Soooooeeeeee)! I once observed a farmer calling his cows for feeding time by the honking of his vehicle horn. The military used to communicate through different bugle calls, such as Taps for a funeral or the end of the day. Or Reveille, a calling together. And then there is the cavalry charge call.

A person’s voice is recognized based upon a number of factors such as familiarity or how often we have heard it. Intimacy forms relationships. The more intimate people are with each other the stronger the relationship, thus, the greater the impact their voice has on us, which then regulates the nature of our response to the sound of their voice. When a mother hears her child cry, she responds immediately. When Jesus uses the example of the shepherd calling his sheep he is tapping into all of these factors.

Jesus said he calls his sheep by name. Using a person’s name denotes or implies a certain degree of familiarity, intimacy and a sense of belonging. Motivational speakers tell us that the most pleasant sound that we hear is the calling of our own name (\*). It means that we are recognized by the other and therefore have a certain degree of value to them (CCC 2156-2159). Remember when you were a kid and you were waiting for your name to be called when they were dividing up the participants

for a team event such as backyard basketball, or flag football? The quicker your name was called the more importance was placed upon your participation and ability.

Well, Jesus is calling our name to be on His team. Do we recognize His voice? Someone may say, "I can't hear Jesus calling me." Remember how recognition is based upon the intimacy of the relationship? If we can't hear His voice, then maybe we are not making a sufficient effort to be familiar or intimate with Jesus. He is calling each of us. But we may be holding Him at a distance, not wanting to commit to a relationship with Jesus. Scripture tells us, "If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart" (Ps 95:9-8) (Heb 3:150 (CCC 2659). That intimacy comes through the depth of our prayer life, our sincerity in receiving His Sacraments, and our willingness to repent of our sins along with our commitment to becoming holy. Jesus said, "Be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Jesus speaks to us through His scriptures. Scripture is the Word of God and when we read or hear scripture it becomes God speaking to us. And we hear Jesus calling us through His Church which has the voice of His Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "He who hears you, hears Me" (Lk 10:16) (CCC 858).

The sheepfold that Jesus referred to that contains all those sheep from many different flocks is like the world in which we live in. We are the sheep living amongst many other sheep. All those sheep are hearing different voices. Jesus is calling all of those sheep, but many are not hearing His voice, as He calls them out of the world and into His kingdom (Jn 15:19) (CCC 675).

Salvation only comes through Jesus. He is the only gateway or narrow door leading to heaven. Choose to live in such a way that you are attune to His voice. Become more intimate with Him through prayer and then His voice will pierce the veil that covers your hearing (2 Cor 4:3-4). Ask Jesus to speak to you, then listen for His voice. He is calling your name. Be quiet and block out all the other voices and noise that is vying for your attention. "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10).

(\*) Dale Carnegie: How to Win Friends and Influence People.

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church