

4.26.26

4th Sunday Easter

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In St. Ignatius Spiritual exercises, he invites those praying through the retreat after meditating on their own life and desire to follow Jesus. He invites them on a meditation on the call of the king. And it begins by thinking about a person, real or imaginary, that we want to follow. A person who has perhaps inspired us, or we know to inspire others. You might think about fictional characters, like Gandalf, or Obi Wan Kenobi. Maybe real people. Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King, Jr., a favorite Saint. When we think about those qualities in them that made others want to follow them, that makes us want to follow them in their example. And then, St. Ignatius invites us to consider what it would be like to follow Christ.

What about him? We hear, we witness that inspires us and wants us, moves in us a desire to follow him, to see Him as the king in the example. For our lives, to be our Shepherd, because as wonderful as many of these other people real or fictional they are, they are not God. They are imperfect. And we desire, as Christians, to follow the king and good shepherd.

First step is to hear his voice, to listen. And I remember before I was introduced to Ignatian spirituality wondering what it meant to listen for the voice of God. Maybe you were wondering that, or you've gone through that yourself, wondering what does it mean to listen for the voice of God? Am I listening for a voice coming from the sky, am I opening up a book in the Bible? And just hoping that the verse I open to will clearly speak to me about my life and what to do. Instead, what we listen for is the movements within us, the way that Christ voice stirs, our hearts, and our minds. And that can happen in so many different ways as we hear his good news. It might be the sense of "Oh, there's something in me that needs to change. This makes me uncomfortable." It could be a sense of peace, or joy, or a sense of this is the right direction. Yes, Lord, I want to be merciful like you. Yes, Lord, I want to comfort like you do. Yes, Lord. I want you to care for the least among us. I want to wash the feet of those around me like you do. We listen, for his word, active in our life, active in our prayer. And then we have an option, to believe and to accept it.

Throughout John's gospel, there is an interplay between Jesus calling for belief and calling us to live out our belief. That it is not sufficient just to say that I believe that Jesus is the Messiah, is the Lord, is my shepherd. But to live also as if that were true. To not do so is Hypocrisy. And even as we recognize the ways that we fall short in our individual lives, maybe even our communal lives, and following that, we know that the Good Shepherd will always pick us back up when we turn to him and try again. So, we're called to follow the

example of Jesus. We move from listening to believing and accepting, and then following Him. Following and learning from his example as we listen to his voice and follow him as the sheep of the good shepherd.

Christ, who as Peter reminds us in our second reading, turns the other cheek, rather than seeking vengeance. And our world today is full of examples of people who would rather seek Vengeance than to turn the other cheek. To be impatient rather than patient. To seek honor, rather than humility and service. And this is what Jesus calls us to, that we celebrated and remembered throughout the pascal Triduum. Where we heard and reenacted the washing of the feet, where we reflected on Jesus' death, and ultimately the resurrection. Calling us to live with Christ in new life, where we move from being sheep to being disciples, to being friends, and finally brothers and sisters, of him who is raised to new life, so that we may share in that resurrection. And in that resurrected life, we are invited with that early, first Christian community who was heard and were moved by St. Peter's preaching on Pentecost to live in the spirit. To live out the fruits of the Holy Spirit from the gifts that we have received. But it all requires first entering into that gate of Christ. Through our prayer, through our listening to scripture. Through our receiving of the sacraments. Where Jesus nourishes us and calls us in the depths of our hearts, so that we can better know him and love him and follow him.

My brothers and sisters, as we listen to the Good Shepherd in our lives, we listen for the one who wishes us peace. And that we might be servants of the kingdom of peace. Peace is the gate of life; love is the gate of life. We are all called to listen to that voice speaking to us, calling us to live our vocations. Whether as students, whether as parents or grandparents, whatever our job, whatever our work, to listen and to live out the example of him who has called us. So may the Eucharist we received today truly help us to live in the spirit. And imitate the good shepherd who calls us **into** life.