

HOMILY 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER 2016

“JESUS SAID; MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE; I KNOW THEM AND THEY FOLLOW ME. I GIVE THEM ETERNAL LIFE ...FROM TODAY’S GOSPEL OF JOHN.

IT WAS NECESSARY THAT THE WORD OF GOD BE SPOKEN TO YOU FIRST, BUT SINCE YOU REJECT IT AND CONDEMN YOURSELVES AS UNWORTHY OF ETERNAL LIFE; WE NOW TURN TO THE GENTILES....PAUL AND BARNABAS SPEAKING TO THE JEWS IN ANTIOCH....FROM OUR FIRST READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

GOOD MORNING (GOOD AFTERNOON).....AND WELCOME TO OUR CELEBRATION OF “GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY” ...

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHYWHY JESUS CHOSE TO LIKEN HIMESLF TO A SHEPHERD??? HAVE YOU EVER WATCHED A SHEPHERD....A HANDLER....WORK HIS SHEEP???

IT WOULD HELP US UNDERSTAND IF WE DID.....MY WIFE AND I WERE BLESSED TO VISIT AUSTRALIA MANY YEARS AGO.....ONE OF THE PLACES WE VISITED THERE WAS A SHEEP RANCH OUTSIDE OF SYDNEY.

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THE SHEEP WERE IN THE PASTURE....MINDING
THEIR OWN BUSINESS....AND THE SHEPHERD SAID “WATCH THIS”!!!!
HE MADE A SOUND.....SOMETHING LIKE.....////YEP///// ALL AT ONCE,
EVERY SINGLE SHEEP’S HEAD SHOT UP.....THEIR EARS WENT UP.... AND
EVERY HEAD TURNED TOWARD THE SOUND.....THEY WERE
LISTENING... THE SHEPHERD MADE ANOTHER SOUND....
////YEP.////AND THEY IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO FORM UP IN A CLOSE
KNIT GOUP AND MOVE TO A DESIGNATED GATE IN THE PASTURE.....IT
WAS UNBELIEVEABLE TO WATCH.....BUT ALSO UNBELIEVEABLE THE
HANDLER....THE SHEPHERD.....TOLD US....WE COULD MAKE AN
IDENTICAL SOUNDBUT THE SHEEP WOULD NOT MOVE A
MUSCLE.....
WHY IS THIS.....THE SHEEP KNOW THEIR SHEPHERD...THEY KNOW HIS
VOICE.....AND THEY WILL FOLLOW THAT VOICE.....EVEN INTO
DANGER. SO, A CHARACTERIZATION AS THE “GOOD SHEPHERD”
SPEAKS TO JESUS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS FOLLOWERS....HIS FLOCK!
THE SHEEP RECOGNIZE THE VOICE OF THE ONE WHO CARES
FOR THEM.....THEY LISTEN FOR IT... ALWAYS.....

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BUT HERE'S THE OTHER SIDE I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT.....

THE SHEPHERD KNOWS HIS SHEEP JUST AS WELL AS THEY KNOW HIM...,

A SHEPHERD SPENDS ENDLESS HOURS CARING FOR HIS SHEEP.....HE

KNOWS THEM JUST LIKE WE KNOW OUR OWN CHILDREN..... AND THIS

IS WHAT MAKES IT WORK.... THEY BOTH....SHEPHERD AND SHEEP....

KNOW EACH OTHER.... THEY HAVE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP.....

BUILT ON TIME SPENT TOGETHER.....KNOWLEDGE OF ONE ANOTHER

....DEVOTION....RESPECT..... AND UNQUESTIONING TRUST IN ONE

ANOTHER.....NOW DO YOU SEE IT.....THAT'S WHY JESUS IS

OUR GOOD SHEPHERD....AND WE ARE THE FLOCK HE

SHEPHERDS.....ALLELUAH!!!!.

NOW.....THINK ABOUT THIS..... JUST FOUR WEEKS AGO, WE RELIVED

THE PASSION OF JESUS....WHO WAS ARRESTED, TORTURED...

...ABANDONED BY HIS FOLLOWERS.....AND THEN CONDEMNED TO

DEATH AND CRUCIFIXED..... BY THOSE WHO DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM AS

THEIR MESSIAH.....

THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE THEIR SHEPHERD'S VOICE.....

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LIKE WISE....IN OUR FIRST READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE
APOSTLESPAUL AND BARNABAS.....**HEARTS AFLAME**..... SHARED
WITH ALL PRESENT IN THE SYNAGOGUE.....JESUS MESSAGE OF LOVE.....
HIS PROMISE OF EVERLASTING LIFE.....AND THEY WERE REJECTED.....
REJECTED FOR SPEAKING CHRISTS WORDS.....TO THE VERY PEOPLE
CHRIST WAS SENT TO SAVE.....

THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE THEIR SHEPHERD'S VOICE.....

NOW WE HAVE TO ASK OURSELVES.....

DOES OUR GOOD SHEPHERD SPEAK TO US???

DO WE RECOGNIZE HIS VOICE WHEN HE DOES???

DO WE LISTEN FOR OUR SHEPHERD'S VOICE?????

WELL, THESE ARE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS, AREN'T THEY.....FOR WE'RE
NOT PERFECT.....THE GOOD NEWS IS, GOD KNOWS THAT ABOUT
US.....WHAT'S IMPORTANT, IS THAT WE DON'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR
NOT LISTENING OR NOT RECOGNIZING HIS VOICE.....

(5)

THE JEWISH SOCIETY OF HIS DAY REJECTED JESUS..... BECAUSE HE
WENT AGAINST THE GRAIN....HE THREATENED TO CHANGE
THINGS IN THEIR SOCIETY....AND THEY DIDN'T WANT TO CHANGE....
SO...THEY CHOSE NOT TO LISTEN.....THEY EVEN EXPECTED THE
MESSIAH..... AND.... JESUS EVEN FULFILLED THE PROPHECIES
PERSCRIBED IN THEIR OWN SCRIPTURES..... BUTTHEY CHOSE..... AS A
SOCIETY....NOT TO LISTEN.....BUT TO CONDEMN.....
IS OUR SOCIETY TODAY MUCH DIFFERENT?????? CHRISTIANS AROUND
THE WORLD ARE BEING PERSECUTED.....TORTURED AND MURDERED....
"TODAY"! SOCIETY TODAY SAYS EVERYTHING IS RELATIVE....THERE ARE
NO CONCRETE RIGHTS OR WRONGS.....IT'S OK TO MAKE OUR OWN
RULES....TO DECIDE FOR OURSELVES WHAT IS RIGHT AND
WRONG...BASED ON WHAT IT DOES FOR US ...HOW IT ENRICHES US....
HOW IT MAKES US FEEL.....
AS CATHOLICS AND CHRISTIANS WE KNOW THIS IS NOT RIGHT.....BUT
OUR SOCIETY IS DOING ALL IT CAN TO CONVINCING US
OTHERWISE....

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THAT'S WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO MAKE TIME TO
LISTEN....LISTEN TO THE ONE WHO LOVES US MOST.....TO SEEK THE
RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM THAT BUILDS THAT FAMILIARITY...
INTIMACY....DEVOTION AND UNQUESTIONING TRUST.....SO WE DON'T
SECOND GUESS OURSELVES WHEN WE HAVE DECISIONS TO MAKE....WE
CHOOSE GOD..... EVERY TIME.....EVEN WHEN THE WORLD.....OUR
SOCIETY... SAYS ITS NOT THE IN THING TO DO!!!!!! EVEN WHEN THE
KIDS SAY....ALL THE KIDS ARE DOING IT!!!!!! OR WHEN SOMEONE AT
WORK SAYS...."IT'S JUST THE WAY BUSINESS IS DONE THESE DAYS! WE
SEE IT IN THE MOVIES....BOOKS, MAGAZINES, EVEN IN OUR LIVING
ROOMS ON TV....OR ON-LINE.....SOCIETY GIVES US PLENTY OF BAD
EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW....DID YOU GET THE FLOCK NOTE TEXT
THURSDAY.....IT SAID....." THINK OF THE TV SHOWS YOU
WATCH.....WOULD YOU WATCH THEM IF JESUS WAS SITTING WITH
YOU???????

IT MAKES YOU THINK.....AND WE NEED TO THINK, BECAUSE OUR
FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT.....OUR CHILDRENS FUTURE DEPENDS ON IT.

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FROM REVELATION.... “THEY STOOD BEFORE THE THRONE BEFORE THE LAMB WEARING WHITE ROBES AND HOLDING PALM BRANCHES.....THEN ONE OF THE ELDERS SAID TO ME...THESE ARE THE ONES WHO HAVE SURVIVED THE TIME OF GREAT DISTRESS.....”
DON'T YOU SEE.....THIS IS THE PROMISE....THIS IS WHERE WE WANT TO BE....THIS IS HEAVEN.....THIS IS WHAT IS AT STAKE.....WHEN WE SURVIVE THE TRIALS WE FACE HERE ON EARTH....AND WE DO FACE TRIALS... DON'T WE.....EVERY DAY WE MUST STAND UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT AND TRUE AND GOOD.....REFUSE TO GIVE IN TO THE WORLDS STANDARDS..... THAT'S WHY WE HAVE A “GOOD SHEPHERD” TO GUIDE US.....IS IT DIFFICULT TO STAND UP TO WHAT THE WORLD TEACHES????.....YES.....IS IT DIFFICULT TEACHING OUR CHILDREN TO STAND UP FOR WHAT IS RIGHT AND GOOD????.....YES.... BUT THE GOOD SHEPHERD DIDN'T SAY IT WAS EASY.....HE JUST SAID IT'S WORTH IT!!!! JOHN SAYS IN REVELATION.....THEY WILL NOT HUNGER OR THIRST ANYMORE....FOR THE LAMB WHO IS AT THE CENTER OF THE THRONE WILL SHEPHERD THEM..... LEAD THEM TO SPRINGS OF LIFE-GIVING WATER..... AND GOD WILL WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES”

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MY BROTHER'S AND SISTER'S IN CHRIST.....OUR GOOD SHEPHERD IS CALLING OUR NAME.....HE DESIRES AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH ONE OF US.....SO, TODAY..... WHEN IT'S TIME FOR COMMUNION..... INSTEAD OF WALKING TO THE ALTER THINKING OF NOTHING IN PARTICULAR.....TODAY.... THINK ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.....WITH JESUS.....LET HIM HEAR YOUR INNER VOICE....THANK HIM FOR THIS DAY....YOUR LIFE...YOUR FAMILY.....AND ALL THAT YOU ARE.....AND AS HIS PRECIOUS BODY IS LIFTED BEFORE YOU AND YOU HEAR THE WORDS "THE BODY OF CHRIST"**SMILE**.....FOR GOD LOVES YOU.....CHRIST DIED FOR YOU... **AND THEN**.... WHEN YOU SAY THAT WORD THAT CONFIRMS YOUR BELIEF IN ALL THAT CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH TEACHES US...WHEN YOU SAY "**AMEN**"REALIZE YOU ARE SAYING IT TO HIM WHO SACRIFICED FOR YOU....WHO FORGIVES YOU.....TO HIM THAT OFFERS YOU EVERLASTING LIFE....

SO TODAY.....SAY YOUR "AMEN"... AS YOUR PLEDGE TO WORK ON YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM....TO KNOW HIM BETTER....AND TO LOVE HIM MORE.....AND TO HELP BRING THOSE IN YOUR LIFE....TO DO THE SAME.

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NOW IF YOU ARE NOT RECEIVING COMMUNION TODAY.....WE DON'T WANT YOU TO SIT IN THAT PEW.....WE WANT YOU TO COME FORWARD FOR A BLESSING AS WELL.....AND THE WAY YOU DO THIS IS SIMPLY COME FORWARD LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.....HAVE THAT SAME CONVERSATION WITH GOD.....BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU TOO.....CHRIST DIED FOR YOU TOO.....WHEN YOU GET TO THE MINISTER CROSS YOUR ARMS OVER YOUR CHEST AND BOW YOUR HEAD TO RECEIVE A BLESSINGAND WHEN YOU SAY "AMEN" AT THE END OF THAT BLESSING.....LET IT BE YOUR PLEDGE TO LISTEN FOR HIS VOICETO ASK HIS GUIDANCE IN YOUR FAITH JOURNEY AND TO DO YOUR BEST TO DO HIS WILL IN ALL YOU DO.

NO SHEEP LEFT BEHIND TODAY!. FOR THAT IS THE WAY JESUS WOULD WANT IT!!!!

TODAY IS OUR DAY.....THE DAY WE PLEDGE TO LISTEN FOR OUR GOOD SHEPHERD'S CALL...TO HEED HIS VOICE...TO TAKE THE TIME.... TO SEEK HIS WORD AND HIS WILL IN ALL WE DO. WHAT A DAY!!!!!!
AMEN.....AND ALLELUIAH!!!!

