

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Easter, Cycle C

The lectionary translation of the readings for this Sunday can be found at <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/051125.cfm>

1st Reading: *Acts 13:14, 43–52*

This is the story of Paul and Barnabas in the synagogue at Antioch. After the readings, the Synagogue officials ask them if they want to speak. Paul takes advantage of the opportunity and talks about the history of God's action with the Jewish people, culminating in the coming of the Lord whom the leaders didn't recognize but put to death. Paul proclaimed the resurrection and showed how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Our selection today, takes up on the following Sabbath when almost the whole town comes to hear him speak.

2nd Reading: *Revelation 7:9, 14b-17*

We continue John's visions in the Book of Revelation. We already know it is full of imagery. In today's selection, the imagery is explained by one of the elders. The time of great distress, which is referenced here, is probably one of the Roman persecutions suffered by the early Church.

Gospel: *John 10:27–30*

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. Jn 10:27

Gospel Reflection

I have a friend; yes, I insist, he is my friend. But he can be very annoying. As you all know, I have a lot of important things to say. Well, it seems every time I try to say something, he breaks in right away and starts his monologue about what he thinks I was going to talk about. Ugh!

I'm sure you all know someone like that. If not, I'd be happy to let you have my friend. The point is that people who do that, don't really listen. And that is what this Gospel is all about. It's about listening. It's about hearing the voice of the shepherd, hearing the voice of the Master. It's about hearing the voice of Jesus.

I think it's too easy for us to not hear the voice of the Lord for a variety of reasons. Primary among those, I think, is that we listen to our own voices too much. We think we have it all figured out so we listen to what we have already figured out, without being open to the voice of the master. It's that "closed-offedness" that keeps us from growing. It keeps us from becoming the wonderful, loving person God created us to be. It keeps us from truly entering the newness of life that relationship with Jesus offers.

Sometimes we listen to other voices. My dad, I think, listened too much to the voices of his peers at the factory where he worked. I don't think that served him too well. I was happy that, after he retired and got away from their influence, he became a more gentle and loving person. It was the real him finally coming out.

Some people, I think, listen to the voice of a particular political party, interest group, or media outlet. There are good things to learn from those voices, but we shouldn't let them do our thinking for us. It

might be easier to not think for ourselves but, as St. Paul says in first letter to the Thessalonians, we should take everything in and test it. “Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.” ^{1 Thes 5:21-22} That’s called discernment. We should be a discerning people, not lazy. That’s the only way we can refrain from every kind of evil.

There are probably other things we could identify that people listen to, but the point is, we need to quiet those voices if we are going to hear the voice of the Lord. We need to quiet our minds and open our hearts. There are many methods that have been advanced to help people listen to the Lord. We each need to find our own way but know that it has to be done in real relationship with the Lord. If we are not in relationship, it’s just an academic enterprise. Academically, we can know what’s true but we can’t know the truth.

That’s what this Gospel is all about; “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” ^{Jn 10:27} We have to be in relationship with him to hear his voice. We have to be in relationship with him for him to know us. And, it is because of this relationship that we follow him, we become his disciples. The benefits are clear; faith in the shepherd brings us life and the safety of being in his arms. (See Jn 10:28)

God bless...

Personal Reflection:

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ^{Jn 10:27}

Question:

What words or phrases attracted your attention during the Liturgy of the Word on Sunday? What connection do those words or phrases have to your day-to-day life? (Why do you think they attracted your attention?) What might God be trying to say to you through these words or phrases? What response should you make? What action should you take?

Alternative:

Share about/Reflect upon what people, ideologies, groups, etc. influence you most in your life. How do those influences effect the decisions you make? What do you need to do in order to discern those voices in relation to the voice of the Lord?

Verse by Verse:

Jn 10:27-30 “My sheep... The Father and I are one.” | The setting for today’s selection is Jesus teaching in the temple on the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah). This is part of Jesus’ response to the “Jews” asking him “How long are you going to keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly”. He first tells them that they do not believe him because they are not among his sheep. Then begins the selection we have today.

Jn 10:27a “My sheep hear my voice...” | AYB points out the shepherd readings from Jewish Scripture were commonly used at the Feast of Dedication. The shepherd in these readings pointed to the Messiah. It makes sense that Jesus would use the imagery from the readings the people just heard and that this would spur the question that the Jewish people asked him.

Jn 10:27 “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.” | This verse implies relationship, which is a relationship of faith in the shepherd, and results in the action of discipleship.

Jn 10:28 “I give them eternal life and they shall never perish...” | This verse indicates the result of a faith relationship with the shepherd.

Jn 10:28c “...No one can take them out of my hand.” | This speaks of the security of being in relationship with Jesus. I take the “no one” to be the evil one.

Jn 10:29 “My Father, who has given them to me...” | This speaks of the eldest son’s relationship with the Father and shows the similarities of us having relationship with the Father and the Son; a relationship of security against evil. In the ancient Jewish culture, a family had a function to fulfill for the community; it might be farming, shepherding, etc. The eldest son took over responsibility for this function from the father. That is why Jesus is spoken of as the firstborn son even though he is the only son.

Jn 10:30 “The Father and I are one.” | This verse was very important for the trinitarian doctrine developed in the fourth century. For John, it is another of the statements that Jesus is God which mark his Gospel.