

May 3, 2020
4th Sunday of Easter
Acts 2: 14a, 36-41
John 10:1-10

Today's Activities & Tasks

- Sunday Mass at 9:30am via Facebook Live
- Sunday Homily from Fr. Brian Johnson
- Rosary Prayers for May

St Pius-St Anthony Homily 4th Sunday Easter Year A

Here's a good question to consider: Likely, you have been asked one like it 100's or 1000's of times, "What is your favorite color? What is your favorite class, favorite book, (for this guy) your favorite ice cream?" But this may be a new one to consider: How about your favorite sound? I've heard about these new devices that emit different kinds of sounds (Calming machines-maybe with flowing water, maybe rainfall, or rhythmic waves, or even children playing off in the distance)

What is your favorite sound? Do musicians have favorite notes? To, let you in on a secret, Preachers have favorite words-some used more than others? But again, I want to start by having you consider what is your favorite sound? Gentle hum of an engine, wind blowing through trees, birds singing, I used to draw so much peace from *just hearing my dog sigh* (of all things I guess because I knew that when she sighed she was going down for nap, and a dog can't chew on your shoe/sock when asleep, or bathroom on you, when they are asleep). But again, everyone has that favorite sound that speaks right to your heart? In the biggest, big picture, this sound for each of us is the voice of God. Jesus says today, "I am the gate" which means He is the opening to our innermost self. As He says "I am the gate", think of that to mean He is the key that unlocks our heart inside us. Isn't that line the best, in the first reading from Acts of Apostles 2:3, "Now when they (the crowd) heard this (Peter's impassioned speech), they were cut to the heart". Peter (really, the Holy Spirit working through Peter) got to them! Now, what I so want to know is what it was in/about Peter's speech (I mean 'speeching' because we have the words). It has to be the Spirit at work. It had to be the sound and the delivery that made the difference (cutting to the heart of the crowd). Was it 'conviction in his voice', 'wisdom beyond his age' that came through him-like

when you say to someone, “How do you know that?” People said such things about Jesus all the time, “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son” or when they claimed that he taught with new authority unlike the Pharisees. People were picking up on something else, about him. Not just the words. And I’d say that is happening with Peter today. It’s the spirit of Jesus cutting to the heart of the crowd. And we all want that, too-Jesus to speak to our hearts. The gospel today gives that to us. (I will move on here, but still don’t give up on the question I asked earlier. What is your favorite sound? If you can be given any sound, what do you want to hear?)

But Jesus does speak directly to our heart today. In this good shepherd reading (this reading really is a tease, because we get ten verses of talk about shepherding but, it is not until verse 11, which isn’t even included in today’s lectionary selection that Jesus says it, ‘I am the Good Shepherd’). Three times we hear ‘voice, voice, voice’. Verse 3 says, ‘hear his voice-call by name’, Verse 4 says ‘recognize voice’ and that same phrase in Verse 5 to not ‘recognize voice’. But then a tragic word surfaces in Verse 6 “They (Pharisees) did not realize what he was trying to tell them.” They don’t or can’t tune in to Jesus’ voice.

But we want to, and we do perk up to his voice, by our faithful turning to him in prayer in Mass here, or when we pick up his word and read it every day or sing praise songs in His service. Again, whatever is our favorite sound, I suggest that behind it is God’s own voice.

What I am emphasizing here today is the power of voice, the power of sound to us. If we are not convinced, here are some examples that demonstrate this lasting power of voice & sound. Often in ministry to the sick, those really sick, they may not respond to caregivers in late stages of health decline. They may not visually respond or initiate an act on their own, but if their caregiver speaks closely toward their ear using their name or for us Catholics sometimes, it almost seems miraculous how they will *rouse enough* to join your words when you start an Our Father/Hail Mary litany-- they will mouth or outright pray speak with you.

Or I think great innovative work is being done right now with Alzheimer’s patients with sound treatments. Sufferers who may not be responsive at all, until you start to sing along a personally relevant song to them and they come out!

Or again, hospice workers all say that through their experience with the dying, that the ear and hearing is the last sense to fade out in the dying process.

How important it is then, that we ‘hear the Shepherd Jesus’ voice. We do.

All this talk about sheep recognizing the voice of the Shepherd, comes home to me, every time I think about one of the family vacations we took as a kid to Opryland. My cousins lived in Nashville, so our family went down to visit and together we went over to Opryland (Nashville’s version of Six Flags) Well,

you know how it is with kids and rides. We kids may not have had the same enthusiasm for the shows as our parents had so we kids took off together to ride rides (but stay together right!) Well, it was a big park. It had this train like a trolley that traveled across the campus (also had an overhead cable care to go from one side to the other). Anyway, as we walked along we came to the track crossing and they had the safety bar come down for everyone to stop while train passed, and what that meant was that the huge crowd all bunched up and then when the bar lifted, there was a mass push forward on, but for me it meant all of sudden, I realized (we weren't holding hands) I was separated from Jeff and Kevin. Where are they? I looked all around and they were nowhere to be seen. The number of strangers grew-blew up. I recognized no one's face. I was lost and in a frenzied panic. What to do? I thought, "I am going to die here" I had started to look around for Opryland workers someone with blue vest to say 'I am lost' and as I moved toward a concession area, I heard what sounded 'oh so sweet'. It was my cousin Kevin's voice yelling, "Brian-get over here." What a comfort, a recognizable voice--the sound of my name. In my opinion, it was a rescuing, saving, comforting one. I know that voice, that name. Thank You God, I said!

And that is what the gospel and first reading tell us: It is God alone who can speak to us the voice our innermost heart recognizes, the sound of the word that we most need to hear. It is Jesus our shepherd who speaks to us, He speaks to our heart. And that is what we need. When we listen and keep our ear toward him, He will speak to us.