

Homily for IV (4) Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd) Year C 08-05-2022 by Fr. Lubem Waya, osj

First Reading: Acts 13:14.43-52

Psalm: Psalm 100

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9.14-17

Gospel: John 10:27-30

WHAT KIND OF SHEPHERD ARE YOU?

Today we celebrate the fourth Sunday of Easter marking Good Shepherd/Vocations Sunday. Christ is our Good Shepherd par excellence, who lays down His life for His sheep. He as God is the author of all vocations, especially the vocation to the priesthood and the consecrated life through which He calls others to also be shepherds like Him over His people. That is why today we are invited to pray for our Shepherds: all our pastors and the bishops, so that they will be filled with the Spirit of Christ the Good Shepherd to serve selflessly; and to pray also for all vocations to the service of God and His people in the Church and the World. This means that the married are also called to be shepherds in their own right. You too have been called to be a shepherd. What kind of Shepherd are you going to be?

Like Paul and Barnabas in our first reading, we are challenged as shepherds, to continue tending the flock entrusted to us even when we are opposed by the same flock. Their preaching was met with stiff opposition by the Jews, but they continued preaching anyways refusing to be discouraged. It is not just because this was their duty, but their persistence was inspired by their faith and trust in Christ who commanded them to preach, saying, 'I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.' In contrast, while the Jews rejected the good news, the pagans accepted it. Thus, the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole countryside until Paul and Barnabas were eventually expelled from the city. Today the good news has spread to all parts of the world. Thanks to the efforts of the apostles. But am I like them, being a true light for the nations?

As a shepherd in the family, your office, in government, or in the Church, what do you do in the face of challenges and opposition? Do you bow to pressure or do you remain faithful to the command of Christ to do what is right no matter the cost? Paul and Barnabas remained faithful to the Lord's command and the challenge of opposition they faced became a stepping stone to success. This is how God works. Indeed, we can say, 'how deep are the wisdom and knowledge of God.' He makes all things right in His own time. Where there is faith, He turns things around for good. He will make things right in our lives too if we also have faith in Him and endure like Paul and Barnabas to the end for His sake.

In the Gospel, He says "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." To hear His voice is to obey Him, and that is when He knows us - when we do His will, and then, we can follow Him. Obedience is what unites us to the one who commands, just as Christ who came not to do His will but the will of the Father became united to the Father by His obedience. For this He tells us today, that He and the Father are one—not just close, but actually one. Little wonder then that Samuel retorted to King Saul, that, "obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Sam.15:22)." Hence, to know Jesus is to know the Father. Jesus doesn't just bring us closer to the Father, He puts us directly into contact with God the Father, removing all distance between us, especially that caused by our sins. Our relationship with Jesus is an invitation to share in the life of God. Are you ready to share in the Divine life? Then, be an obedient sheep who hears the voice of Christ the Good Shepherd and follows Him to the end. To follow Him as such, we must be ready to embrace the tragedy of human existence passing through the crucibles of life without despairing. Our consolation is always that, "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff give me comfort (cf. Psalm 23:4)." Obedience to God's will unites us with Him and nothing can snatch us away from Him; not death, persecution, sickness, or pain, etc. Rather, it would make us conquerors if we wash our robes in the blood of the Lamb. Are you ready to wash your robes in His blood? May He grant us the disposition to hear His voice and follow Him to the very end. Amen.