

4th Sunday of Easter (Sunday April 26, 2026)

We live in a world filled with voices - voices from the news, from social media, from people around us - telling us who we are or who we should be; what matters; how we should live.

It can become overwhelming.

So much so, that we don't always realize how deeply those voices are shaping us. And so, we're asked a simple question:

Whose voice are we listening to?

In today's Gospel, we hear of shepherds and we reflect upon Jesus as the Good Shepherd this weekend—but He also speaks of Himself as the Gatekeeper.

He is both the One who calls & the One through whom we must pass.

The image would have been very real for His listeners.

Sheep were usually kept together in a common enclosure, and in the morning, each shepherd would call out—and only his sheep would follow. They recognized his voice.

Jesus tells us that not every voice leads to life.

Some voices scatter, they confuse, and ultimately harm.

And so, the Christian life begins by learning to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd and choosing to enter through Him, the Gate.

It's not enough simply to hear His voice—we must also trust Him enough to follow, to let Him lead us to where life is found.

Our faith isn't first about rules or obligations.

It's about a living, loving relationship with Jesus our Lord.

A relationship that is strengthened when:

- We listen to His Word;
- We speak with Him in prayer;
- We receive Him in the Eucharist;
- We live in communion with Him and with each other.

But we need help. We can't recognize His voice on our own.

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It's the Holy Spirit who opens our hearts; who sharpens our hearing; who helps us discern what is truly from Jesus and what's not.

Saint Peter reminds us in the Second Reading: *"You were once like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."*

That word—*guardian*—is important.

Jesus isn't distant; He isn't indifferent; He guards us and protects us.

He is the One who laid down His life for us.

He is the One who stands at the gate—not to keep us out, but to lead us into a better life, an Eternal Life.

He says: *"I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly."*

That's God's desire for us—not a restricted life; not a burdened life, but a full and abundant life.

That life is found only when we listen to Him; follow Him; enter into the life He desires for us.

Listening & following is the beginning of discipleship.

And a question each of us must ask ourselves in prayer:

Lord, what are you asking of me right now?

- For some, it may start with a return to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- For some, to forgive someone whom it's been hard to forgive.
- For others, stepping forward in service.

But for all of us, it means being open to the call of God in our lives.

We celebrate today Good Shepherd Sunday—but also the World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

Every vocation begins by hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd and responding.

Whether it's the vocation to marriage, to the priesthood, to religious life, or to dedicated service, God is still calling us to SOMETHING.

The foundation of all vocations is the vocation to marriage and family life.

- It's in the home that we first learn to hear God's voice.
- It's in the family that we learn to pray, to love, to sacrifice, to forgive.
- It's in strong, faith-filled Catholic families that vocations to the priesthood and religious life are most often born.

If we want more priests; if we want more religious, then we must first have strong marriages, rooted in Christ:

- Where prayer is real;
- Where faith is lived;
- Where the parish is not an afterthought, but an extension of our homes;

Because vocations do not appear out of nowhere.

They grow in the soil of a living faith.

I think especially of our young people—those preparing for Confirmation. Many of them have taken real steps—not just to learn the faith, but to live it, to serve, to be involved.

That's where vocation begins. Not in grand gestures, but in small, faithful responses to the voice of Christ.

And so today, we pray:

- For strong and holy marriages;
- For families alive in faith;
- For young men and women who will have the courage to say yes to priesthood and religious life;
- For all of us—that we may be attentive to whatever God is asking of us.

Because in the end, everything comes back to this:

Whose voice am I listening to?

- The voices that surround me, that pull me in every direction?
- Or the voice of the Good Shepherd who knows me; who calls me; who leads me?

And am I willing not only to hear Him, but to enter through Him into the joys of Heaven?

He is the gate.

And only through Him do we find what we are truly looking for.

So today, let us ask for the grace—not just to hear His voice—but to recognize it, to trust it, and to follow it.

Because the Lord's calling.

And His voice... is the one that leads us home.