

Easter IV **“...His sheep follow Him because they know His voice.”** (John 10:4b)

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We have **CALLER ID** on our phones at home. This enables us to know at a glance not only the number but also the business, the agency, the institution, or the person who is making the call—long before we expend the energy or waste our time in answering the phone. If it’s someone trolling for \$\$ or wanting to sell us something or even worse, a political campaign poll-taker, we don’t bother answering.

Before we had **CALLER ID**, however, we used to answer the phone to voices that talked like they knew us, like we already had some kind of relationship: so friendly, and sweet and welcoming. Yet we didn’t recognize their voice—and finally—we didn’t want to listen...or talk...anymore. No doubt, all of you have had this same experience. And we know what we do: **CLICK!**

Frankly, if we don’t recognize the voice—if we don’t know who’s talking to us—then we’re not listening. Goodbye.

In the Gospel Reading for today “recognizing/knowing **the voice**” is essential for life with Jesus—life as one of His own dear sheep. He is the Shepherd, and we are His flock. The Shepherd speaks, and we recognize His voice. We listen to His voice speaking to us because His voice calls us by name, and His voice leads us.

With all the noise in the world today—and with all the noise some days in our own hearts—it becomes difficult to hear the Good Shepherd’s voice. Today, whenever people don’t want to listen to anything/anyone else, they plug earphones into their ears—but even with that, you can’t always shut off the noise coming from inside yourself: the noise of fear and worry, of shame for something you’re hiding, of a grudge you continue bearing against a loved one, the noise of sorrow over the loss of a precious and dear loved one.

So much noise. The voice of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, though cuts through all the noise with the clear clarion call of Calvary: **“It is finished,”** cries Jesus from His cross—that was the cross upon which (as Peter writes in the Epistle today), **“He Himself bore our sins in His body so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.”**

The voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd is not that of a carnival huckster trying to get us to lay down our \$\$ and take a chance. He is not trying to manipulate us into buying something or even trying something. The voice of Jesus is not hounding us with the shaking-finger of shame nor haranguing us with guilt. He knows well who we are—He knows well our sins—our failures—our fallings—our misspent days.

The voice of Jesus comes from Calvary: **“It is finished.”** The voice of Jesus comes with blood. The bloodstains on the wood of His cross are from a Lamb without spot or blemish upon whom was laid the iniquity of us all. The voice of Jesus comes with blood

—it comes with His own holy life laid down for us: ***“I have come to seek and to save the lost.”*** He is talking about us—about His sheep—about the depths He will go to find us and rescue us.

The voice of Jesus calls and gathers us into the sheep pen, into the safe keeping of the Father’s saving love for us, fallen sinners. That voice calls us into that pen through the narrow gate of His suffering and death for us. ***“No one comes to the Father except through Me,”*** says the Good Shepherd. There is no other name than the name of Jesus by which we are saved—there is no other death than the death of Jesus that leads to eternal life. He and He alone is the way, the truth, and the life. No other ways—no matter how attractive or how religious or how righteous they seem—lead to life in the Father’s eternal care.

“He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes on ahead of them, and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice.” No CALLER ID needed.

Jesus is not behind us, driving us. I learned that as a boy: you drive cattle—you got to get behind them and drive them, yelling all the way. You don’t drive sheep. You lead them—you get out in front of them and lead them. And yelling doesn’t work.

Jesus goes before us. He is the firstborn from the dead. Even in the valley of the shadow of death we will not fear because He is there with us, having blazed the trail from death to life, having opened the way of everlasting life in the Father’s care. His voice calls out to us—it is the voice of resurrection victory, of certainty—the certainty of knowing that we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever! ***“Follow Me,”*** says Jesus.

His gentle Shepherd’s voice calls out to us: ***“Fear not, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you”*** (Is. 43:2).

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

No CALLER ID needed.

With His voice He goes before us, leading us. We know His voice. It is the voice that speaks to us every time we hear/read His Word: Scriptures. It is the voice that reminds us of our new name each time we remember with repentance our Baptism. It is the voice that says to us again this day in the bread and wine of His Supper: ***“Take eat, My Body given for you...Take drink, My Blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”***

We know His voice, and we follow Him. Other voices clamor for our allegiance and our attention, voices that promise the moon but deliver only emptiness and darkness. The voice of our Shepherd, Jesus, is the voice—the only voice—that calls us from life to life. ***“I have come that you may have life—life abundant!”***

No **CALLER ID** needed for His voice. We know His voice as the voice of our Savior and Shepherd because He has given us ears to hear. And because we have those hearing ears, we confess with word and life what it means to have a Shepherd like the Lord Jesus:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want...