

4th Sunday of Easter – Yr C    May 11-12, 2019    by Kevin Williams

John 10:27-30

I want to tell you the story of an eight-year-old boy. His name was Jamie. Jamie was dying of cancer. In the final stages of his illness Jamie started talking out loud when he was all alone, day or night. When his mom heard him, she'd come into his room to see if he was okay. He would thank her and assure her he was just fine. One night this happened twice. His mom came into the room and, once again, he assured her that he was fine. The second time she came in he said, "Mom, you don't have to come every time you hear me talking. Usually, I'm talking to God."

That response began to worry Jamie's dad, who wondered if Jamie was hallucinating. So one day when they were talking, he asked his son, "Jamie, when you talk to God, does God talk back to you? For example, do you hear His voice, just as you hear my voice now?"

Jamie looked at his dad with a somewhat puzzled look: "Dad, I don't hear God's voice with my ears, but with my heart."

That story starts to get at the heart of today's gospel, where Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me."

One way we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd is what Jamie

referred to as his heart. It's like the inner ear of the soul. What Jamie was actually talking about was prayer. And that's what Jesus is getting at when He says that we hear His voice. We hear His voice through prayer. So Jesus is saying that it takes an active prayer life to know Him and to follow Him.

Are there different ways that Jesus speaks to us? Yes, there are many different ways He communicates with us.

For instance, He wants us to hear His voice through His sacred Word, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. He says so much to us through the Bible. That's why we hear so much of it in the Mass. In the readings and in the prayers of the Mass. But He also wants to speak to us through the Bible during private prayer. Read the Scriptures. Pray as you do so. If you don't know where to start, use the daily Mass readings. They're printed in the bulletin. In other words, get a bulletin and use it to help you in your prayer life.

Are there other ways that God speaks to us? There are so many ways that the list is endless. Right now, I want to point out some ways that God makes available to us through the church. They're known as the Sacraments. Every sacrament is something that God has given to

us to communicate to us and give us His grace. Some of the sacraments are received only once, but two in particular can, and should be, received often. You probably know what which two I'm talking about. Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist.

These two sacraments are vital to the daily life of the church. That means that they are vital in our daily lives.

In Reconciliation, God gives us the chance to come to Him, confess our sins, and receive His infinite mercy. When we do this, God is inviting us to bring Him our vices and let Him help us turn them into virtues. That's not an easy process, but He is so concerned with our well-being that He begs us to come to Him. The very process of confessing our sins means we are humbling ourselves, which means we are trying to be less prideful. That's a good start. After all, it's not easy to come to anyone and tell them the things we've done wrong. Now, what is God saying to us through this sacrament? He is saying that He loves us completely and tenderly. He is saying that He wants us to be in union with Him, that He doesn't want our sins to cause any separation between us and Him. So don't let Reconciliation continue to be the neglected sacrament.

I also mentioned that the Holy Eucharist is vital to the life of the church. That's an understatement. The Eucharist is what drew the early church together to join with each other in worship. It's not an exaggeration to say that everything the church has ever done came about because of the Eucharist. That's sounds like a pretty bold statement, but here's the truth of it. Because they gathered for the Eucharist, they found the inspiration they needed to start getting organized to do many different things. At first, they started to reach out by helping the poor widows in their community. For many years, because the church was being persecuted, that was the main thing they could do. Eventually, after Christianity become legal, many institutions were founded. Schools, universities, hospitals, clinics, charitable organizations. The glue that held the church together all those years was, you guessed it, the Eucharist. Without it, none of the churches' good works would have been possible. The Eucharist is literally the driving force behind everything the church has accomplished in the world.

Now, what is it that God says to us through this precious gift of the Eucharist? He says, "I am so in love with you I will do anything to show you how much I love you. Even if it means giving my life for you on a cross."

Every time we come up to receive Holy Communion, Jesus is saying to us, "Remember what I've done for you. Remember that I died on the cross, and rose from the dead, to take away the guilt of your sins, and to offer you eternal life with me."

Now, can we look at this and humanly say we understand how this happens. Can we understand how the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus? I don't think so. If we take a microscope and look at the host, we can't see any change. Then how can we know it's true? You've heard me say this before, but the evidence we have is in the Scriptures, and in our belief that Jesus is the Son of God. As the Son of God, Jesus is incapable of telling us something that isn't true. Well, right there in the Bible, Jesus tells us it is His Body and Blood. Since He is the Second Person of the Trinity, we ought to be able to take His words at face value and believe Him.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, we started off hearing about Jamie, the eight-year-old boy dying of cancer. We could see that he was listening to God. I hope we will do as well listening to God in all the ways He speaks to us. In a few minutes, He will speak to us again when we receive Communion. Will we be listening?