

Fourth Sunday of Easter- C
Gaizel Arguelles Adan

Lectionary 51:

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5

Revelation 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/051125.cfm>

Possible preaching themes:

- **The voice of Jesus, our Shepherd, calls us.** Jesus' voice, as our Shepherd, is a discernable voice that lovingly calls us to follow him and receive eternal life.
- **The sheep feel a sense of belongingness.** The sheep understand that they belong to the flock and to the shepherd proclaiming, "We are his people, the sheep of his flock."
- **Jesus, the Lamb of God, shepherds us.** Jesus, the Lamb of God, knows our pain and suffering. He shepherds us his flock and "wipes away every tear from [our] eyes."

Possible scientific resources:

- [Animals fear human voices more than a lion's growl.](#) A study was conducted in South Africa's Greater Kruger National Park to understand the reactions of 19 animal species to playback sounds of humans, lions, dogs, and gunshots. The research revealed that the wildlife species under observation were twice as likely to run and abandon waterholes in response to humans than to lions. The study shows that the most feared species by wildlife are humans, not their predators.
- [Effects of human presence and voice on the behavior of shelter dogs and cats.](#) This study revealed that shelter cats and dogs tend to exhibit more engagement when they are being read a book (using a prerecording) with physical human presence than when they only hear the audio without human presence.
- [Sheep can talk to each other.](#) The "baa" sounds that sheep produce carry different emotions that only sheep can understand. This study concludes that because sheep can distinguish the vocalization of their fellow sheep, they can communicate with each other.
- [Sheep's characteristics.](#) Sheep possess a spectrum of notable qualities that set them apart from other species. They have excellent vision and hearing, excellent sense of smell, and excellent facial recognition. They can also exhibit emotional contagion.

- [Sheep's facial-recognition abilities](#). This experiment shows that sheep have advanced face-recognition abilities comparable to the facial recognition of humans.
- [Sheep can help improve humans' emotions, mindfulness, and self-efficacy expectancy](#). This study used sheep as part of the animal-assisted intervention (AAI) they gave to their patients with substance use disorders (SUDs). The sheep contributed to improving the emotions, mindfulness, and self-efficacy expectancy of the patients.

Homily outline:

- **Animals fear human voices**
 - Animals in the wild tend to be more afraid of humans than lions. Lions are considered the “king of the jungle,” yet humans pose more threats to wildlife species. Animals can recognize human voices that they associate with danger. Upon hearing human voices, they are overwhelmed by fear and run to find safety.
 - Animals have been victims of human destruction and greed. Poaching is a prevalent activity that threatens the lives of wildlife species. Ultimately, this is harming human-animal relations.
- **The loving voice of the Shepherd**
 - Animals can sense danger from a distance. Because of the destructive ways of humans toward the environment, human voices ignite fear in wildlife species.
 - Jesus’ voice as a shepherd is different. Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me.”
 - The shepherd and the sheep share a special bond. The sheep know that the shepherd cares about them and will not hurt them. It takes great trust on the part of the sheep to feel comfortable with the shepherd.
 - The shepherd is loving and trustworthy making his voice non-threatening and inviting to the sheep when they hear it. Hearing the shepherd call them, they are drawn to trust and follow him.
 - Similarly, in our relationship with Jesus, we can recognize his voice of love expressed in different ways: experiencing the kindness of people, receiving a reassuring response in our prayer, or being led to our life vocation.

- **Discerning the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd**

- There are times when we hear many voices in the crowd. It might be hard to distinguish the voice of Jesus from the rest when other voices drown it. These voices are seemingly inviting but will lead us to danger.
- An excerpt from the poem ["The Good Shepherd" by Stanley Moss](#) perfectly describes the thin line between the good shepherd and the butcher:

Still, I knew there was only a thin line
between the good shepherd and the butcher.
How many lambs had put their heads between the shepherd's knees,
closed their eyes, offering their neck to the knife?
Familiar – the quick thuds of the club doing its work.
More than once at night I saw the halo coming.
I ran like a deer and hid among rocks,
or I crawled under a bush, my heart in thorns.

- The voice of temptations surrounds us and gives us false promises or temporary happiness. How do we discern then the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd?
- To help us discern the voice of Jesus, we need to cultivate our relationship with him through prayer, scripture reading, and seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Doing this will help us become more familiar with his voice.
- We then discover that Jesus, as our Shepherd, does not promise fleeting moments of happiness or satisfaction. His promise is not just temporal but eternal.
- Jesus, our Shepherd, promises us eternal life, "I give them eternal life and they shall never perish." If we trust Jesus and follow him, we can experience a meaningful life that transcends the material world. It entails a life of love, peace, compassion, and joy lived with other sheep in the flock of Jesus.

- **Imitating the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd**

- The Jesus example invites us to modulate our voices, our speech, so that we do not ignite fear in our listeners, our friends, our families. In an era of so much divisive and demeaning rhetoric, this Sunday calls us to imitate the voice of the Shepherd, so that everyone is invited into and feels safe in his fold.

Tags: shepherd, sheep, eternal life, wildlife