

Who do you listen to?

Are you really listening?

Questions that cause us to think

Because we all listen to something or someone

But are we making the choice to deliberately listen?

This is needed today more than ever

Look at this past week

With so much going on

Who were you listening to?

I would think most of us had one or two sources for news

When the bombings went off in Boston

Then the fertilizer plant blowing up in Texas

The trial of the abortion doctor in Philadelphia

Whether we had NBC, ABC, FOX or CNN

Or whether we read the papers or internet news sites

We were getting our information from somewhere

And we trust that source

If we didn't, we would find an alternative source

But whatever source we use, we trust it

Why?

Are they protected from error?

Is everything they report factual?

Or do they give us their particular version of what is happening?

Is there one source we can trust?

In the field of modern day media

Probably not

But in the field of eternal life

Yes there is

And although we may not like what we hear

Although what we hear will call us to conversion

Although the voice may get drowned out by all the other noise

It is there

Calling out to us

Inviting us to open not only our ears

But our hearts as well

But this is nothing new

We see the same things happening in our first reading

Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch

They go to the Synagogue to teach

They are so popular; they are invited back the following week

Almost the whole city turns out to hear them

But the leaders are not listening

They are filled with jealousy and envy

These blocked the Word from taking root in their hearts

So they attack Paul and Barnabas

Forcing them to turn to the Gentiles who would listen

In our Gospel, we hear directly from Jesus

My sheep hear my voice

I know them, and they follow me

I will give them eternal life

And no one can take them out of my hand

And no one can take them out of the Father's hand

These words have caused some discomfort in the minds of many

I am not a sheep

Blissfully following along

I am an American

I make my own way

Nobody tells me what to think

What to do

That is the voice of the world

The culture of self-fulfillment

If it feels good, do it!

Who do we choose to listen to?

The world's voice

Shouting from the movies and television shows

The radio and music we listen to

The culture of pleasure seeking

Getting what we can while there is still time

Or do we listen to that quiet, still voice

One that is heard in our hearts

Do we even give that voice a chance to be heard?

Do we open our hearts to what the bishop has to say

Do we follow our pope because we like him?

Or because of whom he represents

There is a certain danger in this

I have heard people say they liked John Paul

But not so much what Benedict had to say

And now they are enamored with Francis

We cannot follow a pope based on a personality cult

If we do, we risk falling into error

Only following the parts we like

Or interpreting their teaching according to our likes and dislikes

My sheep hear my voice

I know them, and they follow me

This is a great quality of sheep

The ability to hear and recognize the voice of their shepherd

Cardinal Dolan tells a story about being in Jerusalem

Sheep – shepherds – calling them

Changing clothes – calling them – for show

The truth came out

It is the voice they recognize and follow

We need to hear the voice of truth and love so we will follow

The voice of one who knows us

One who has laid down his life for us

One who invites us to follow in his path

Not a voice that calls us to do as we please

Not a voice that promises a perfect world

That is a false world

A TV world where romance always wins in the end

A mystery is solved in an hour

There are no interruptions

No crying babies

Everyone has perfect teeth and pressed clothes

Where success in business is success in life

But that is not real life

We have a Good Shepherd leads us through real life

Where friends come up short

Where we don't always meet worldly success

Where we get dirty and sick

A world where we suffer and lose loved ones

Even a world where sin affects our religious leaders

Because it affects all of us

But if it is not worldly success that is guaranteed, what is?

I give them eternal life

And they shall never perish

We enter into this eternal life bit by bit

Yes, we take a big step at our death

But it is not like we are just going our way until then

We listen along the way

And we respond to the Word we hear

We enter into the life of Christ by living sacramental lives

Receiving into our hearts and souls the gifts Christ desires to give

His Word in Sacred Scripture

The Eucharist

His body and blood; His soul and divinity

The sacrament of reconciliation

Where we receive forgiveness

And where we make a pledge to Christ

A pledge to turn from sin and from the near occasion of sin

A mindless repetition of this sacrament with no effort to change is empty

The sacraments of marriage and Holy Orders

Being faithful to the state of life we are called to

To live that vocation by our words and choices

If we turn or have loved ones that turn away from God

Knowing the truth

God did not force us

He does not turn his back

No one can take them out of my hand

No one can take them out of the Fathers hand

It is through our choice not to listen

Our choice not to enter into conversion

Our choice to turn our backs

And to know the invitation is always there to return

Christ's hand is always extended to us

But we can only reach out in humility, poverty and truth

These are our guides in life

To let these guide our listening

This listening is also at the heart of our vocation

In fact, this is also vocation awareness day

The root of vocation is, in fact, 'vocare'

To listen

Each of us has a personal vocation

The path Christ calls us to follow

It is important for us to discover what that path is

Whether it is to be a wife or a husband

Whether it is to serve as a priest or in religious life

Whether it is to be a single person in the world

We are all called to 'our' vocation

It is not that there is one that is objectively better

But there is one that is subjectively better

A vocation is never something that should be rushed into

**Sacrifices made while discerning a vocation pay off when
temptations arise**

And they will come along

In our vocation we find our joy and happiness

It is also where we find our challenges and suffering

In short, our vocation is our life

Where we learn to listen

Where we learn to recognize his voice

Where we learn to follow

Making choices each moment of our lives

As we move through this life

Into eternal life