

Easter4-A6 Homily by Fr. Gabor

We can learn a lot from today's readings about what touches people's hearts so powerfully, what is it that makes them turn completely around from being those who crucified Christ to being committed Christians. We also make Jesus sad or even crucify Him spiritually when we commit serious sins, so we need to rediscover what touches our hearts and leads us to repentance and to a renewed commitment to Christ.

Peter in the first reading speaks to the people of Israel who crucified Christ, and teaches them and explains them the Scriptures about the Messiah whom they crucified, just like Jesus explained the Scriptures for the disciples of Emmaus in last Sunday's Gospel reading, and as the people listen to Peter their spiritual eyes are open to see what a terrible thing they have done, so they are cut to the heart. Remember the disciples of Emmaus also said that their hearts were burning as they heard the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. Why? Because their shattered hopes in the Messiah was revived. So proper interpretation of the Scriptures is a very important starting point for a heartfelt conversion and renewal of your lives.

But it is very important to notice that both Jesus and Peter were filled with the Holy Spirit when they gave the proper interpretation of the Scriptures. So you need the Holy Spirit to get God's message through the Scriptures.

But when you hear the Truth of the Scriptures you need to slow down, and listen to it with a humbled contrite heart, putting aside your own interest and agenda, and then you will hear the Father speaking to your heart, and because His word is Spirit and life, your heart is touched and you are drawn to His words.

So take the Scriptures, pray to the Holy Spirit with humility and ask Him to guide your minds and hearts as you read it, and just be open to receive whatever He wants to say. Be open even to an illogical or impossible message, because as God says through Isaiah: my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Lectio Divina is highly recommended for learning to hear the Father's voice.

So the most important thing is that from among the many words of the Scriptures that you listen to, you hear the actual voice of the Father. There are many words that you hear when you listen to the Scriptures, but at that moment God wants to tell you only one or a few of them, and these words will touch your hearts, because through them the Father wants to tell you something. When you hear His voice with the ears of your heart your heart is cut or burns inside you. This only happens if you listen with focus, attention, in a relaxed way, with openness and with humility.

The Gospel reading about the Shepherd and the Sheep is a symbolic demonstration of the importance of the voice of the Father. In this parable the Shepherd is not Jesus, but the Father. Jesus is the gate, which He himself says. He says that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, ie. the way through whom the Father comes to you and through Whom you go to the Father. The flock is us, and the pasture is the spiritual nourishment that the Father gives. According to the Psalm the pasture is a place of rest, of refreshment, of nourishment, and most importantly the place where the sheep and the Shepherd spends a lot of time together, so it is a place for your heart to heart relationship with the Father.

Jesus says: *'The sheep hear His voice, [the Father's voice] one by one He calls His own sheep and leads them out... and the sheep follow, because they know His voice.'* So you need to be able to recognise the voice of the Father if you want to follow His voice and not someone else's, because as Jesus points out there are also thieves who come to steal. Steal what, your heart! They gain access to your heart by kindness, attraction, kind words, even by using your faith, because that is what touches the heart, but behind all these the thieves have their own agenda and not God's plan for you, so they steal your heart and eventually break your heart without any concern for you.

Just reading the Bible doesn't mean that you hear the Father's voice. I spoke to a lady last week who is a devout Catholic and often reads the Bible, but she said she doesn't know what God is telling her. Most people would not know what God is telling specifically to them, although many have read or heard the words of the Bible, especially if they go to Church. And yet God speaks specifically to each one of us, because as we heard in Jesus' parable the Shepherd calls the sheep one by one. That does not normally happen on a farm. Normally the shepherd just opens the gates and let everyone go out into the fields, so there is no conversation between shepherd and sheep. But Jesus wants to emphasise that the Father speaks to each one of you individually and calls you to follow Him where He gives you spiritual nourishment. In our private life we all need God's personal intimate message which touches and nourishes our hearts, because ultimately we are His children.

However, there are a few indicators that you can use to distinguish between the voice of the Father and the voice of thieves. The Father's voice always comes with peace in your heart, He never cause you to fear or panic or do things hastily without thinking. His words are always in agreement with the proper interpretation of the Scriptures, His words are also confirmed by those who are close to God, by God-loving people, and His words are confirmed by circumstances (eg. Jeremiah 32:6-9). If you want to know more about hearing God's voice I can send by request a more detailed explanation in a Powerpoint presentation. Just send your request to the parish email address.

So let us learn how to hear the voice of the Father, because every renewal and conversion starts there. His word gives you life just as it gave live to the new, young and lively early church (cf. Psalm 19; John 6:63.68).