

Easter5-A6 Homily by Fr. Gabor

In the first it really caught my attention how important it was the spreading of the word of God for the apostles. The spreading of the word particularly enjoyed first priority in their ministry, because whether you realise or not knowing God through His word was absolutely essential.

Once the apostles had heard about the complaints of the Hellenists against them, namely that the widows were neglected by the apostles, they delegated their charitable works to some reputable people and kept focusing on the spreading of the word of God.

The spreading of the message of God was important not in the interest of the apostles, but in the interest of the people who were told lies by their leaders, the 'spiritual thieves and brigands'. Remember in last Sunday's Gospel Jesus warned the sheep that the spiritual thieves only come to steal and destroy. The hearts and minds of the people were stolen when they were told to demand Jesus' crucifixion. They had seen and heard Jesus while he was still walking among them, and had seen all the good He has done, and yet they crucified Him. Their hearts and minds were stolen, because they listened to the thieves and followed their lies.

But by now the time had arrived to proclaim them the truth about Jesus' victory over death, and tell them that they were forgiven if they had repented, in fact they were also invited to share that eternal happiness which Jesus had won for them.

This is relevant to our lives as well, because we also have heard Jesus' teaching and perhaps even seen or heard about the many good things that He has done in our lives or in the lives of others. But we are also bombarded with the voices, images and ideas of secularism every day, and I myself can also recognise how strongly it influences even the thinking and attitudes of many believers who used to go to church every day. From time to time human ideas and voices become more important for you than the voice of the Good Shepherd.

But Peter tells you today: set yourself close to Jesus. How can you set yourself close to Him? Peter says that you need to believe in Jesus and make Him the cornerstone of your life. Build your life and your important decisions on Him and on His voice. How can you build your life on Him, if you can't hear His voice?

You can start with reading the Bible regularly, every day. The Bible is important for forming a general idea about how Jesus thinks and who He is, but that's only a general idea. It doesn't mean you know what He is telling you right now. If you try to apply His principles, the Beatitudes to your life that's a further step. But still it doesn't mean you are hearing His voice, in the present.

In the Gospel reading Jesus says you can come to the Father only through Him. He is not the written word of the Bible, but the living Word of the Bible. So the

words of the Bible have to come alive somehow, if you want to hear Jesus speaking live through the Bible. It is the Holy Spirit who breathes the life of Jesus into the written word of God. So ask Him to bring the words of the Bible alive for you before you read it. Then you only have to listen, and some words of what you have written will come alive. You will hear God speaking gently to you personally through these few words. I experience this every week when I prepare my homily.

Lectio Divina is a good way of hearing God's living and personal word to you.

There are other ways also through which Jesus communicates with you, like through people, your spouse, your children, through radio, tv, through nature, etc.

But it is also very important to know how you can distinguish between the voice of God and the voice of the thieves, because you are bombarded with many ideas and images every day, I am sure. So here are some general principles:

- God's voice leaves a sense of deep general peace in your heart and mind, unlike Satan, who disturbs your heart and mind
- God's voice never pushes you to do things. He puts forward ideas to you, but leaves you free to choose, whereas Satan's voice seduces you to actions, and arouses passions and desires so much so that you eventually give in, and later regret it.
- God never flatters you with kind words and once you are of no use leaves you. It is evil's way, instead God always tells you the Truth, admonishes you if you have committed a sin, but at the same time encourages you and consoles you.
- God's voice opens up a wider horizon in front of you when you plan, whereas evil only wants you to focus on the here and now in your plans.
- God is in the present and therefore he wants you to be aware that He is there with you, so there is nothing to worry about, just do what love demands, whereas evil wants you to worry about the future or dwell on past hurts in the present, and so discourages you to love others with your whole heart.
- God always tells you to think about what is for the spiritual good of you and others, whereas evil wants you to focus on your own ego your material needs.
- God always puts words of life and light into your minds and heart, whereas evil plants dark thoughts and feelings into your mind and heart.
- God wants you to trust Him and then others, whereas evil wants you to trust yourself only, and never God.