

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

4th Sunday of Easter | For Sunday, May 8, 2022

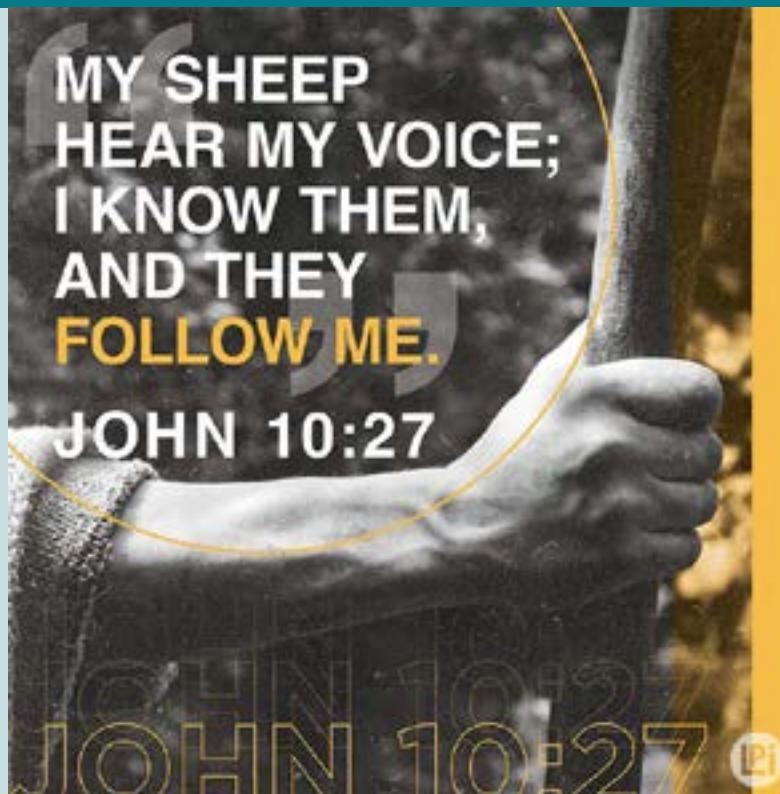
Learn to Hear with Your Heart

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Revelations 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30



When a friend describes a beautiful sunset, a picture is created in your mind. The words enable you to make meaning. When a parent reacts to a child's artwork, meaning is created between child and parent, which can affect the child's self-concept for a lifetime.

Likewise, when a lie is spoken, a false reality is constructed that, once discovered, can rupture relationships. For example, when Bill Clinton's inner circle believed his lie that he hadn't had sex with Monica Lewinsky, their minds accepted an "unreal reality." Their eventual discovery of the truth and resulting feelings of betrayal were probably more dramatic than those who hadn't believed Clinton in the first place. This power to affect one another is serious business. Our spoken words shape the reality of those with whom we interact.

Words. We use them all day long — through our speech and through our thoughts. They have the power to destroy and the power to create. They have the power to inspire and delude. They have the power to free and imprison. We hear empty words and encouraging ones, we use both of them as well. Words communicate meaning, and we form impressions and decide actions based upon the value of that meaning, either positive or negative.

Words are spoken by a voice. Some voices are shrill and high-pitched, while others are warm and soothing. The words spoken by that voice communicate meaning as well as emotion. We sense the emotion through the speed and intensity of the words used, not to mention non-verbal body language.

All this lead up is simply to ask one question: what does Jesus' voice sound like to you?

There are many voices that call for our attention throughout the day. We find ourselves being pulled in hundreds of directions trying our best to give our full attention to those voices and addressing their needs. Jesus' voice is that tiny, still voice that speaks in the silence of the heart, which is the organ to hear his voice, not the mind and not the ears. It does not demand our attention, but patiently waits for our attention to be given. His voice speaks nothing else but love, but our hearts drown out his voice because the other voices are clanging and clamoring, and our tendency is to go where the volume is loudest because it is certain, not where the volume is softest.

As one matures in the spiritual life, they discover the voices that call for our attention can be whittled down to three: the voice of the world, the voice of the Evil one, and the voice of God. It takes time to learn how to discern between these, but this skill is of utmost

importance in order for us to navigate through the complexities of the modern world and of our daily lives. Having regular faith conversations with a men's or women's sharing group is certainly helpful, as is seeing a spiritual director regularly. But most importantly, this skill is learned in moments of personal prayer. For it is in these moments, when the heart finally seeks the Lord, He will speak. When you've listened, then act. Do what He tells you. Follow the example of Jesus who did the will of his Father.

Br. John-Marmion Villa

PRAYER

Lord, I draw near to You today.
I am seeking Your face,
I want to hear Your voice.
I want to learn Your will for my life,
and to obey it wholeheartedly.
Help me to know Your voice,
and not to be deceived
by the voice of a stranger.
Help me to guard my heart
from the influences of this world
and the people around me.
Help me not to be deceived
by the devil and his lies,
but to view all my thoughts
and decisions through the lens
of Your righteousness.
As I seek to hear Your voice
for instruction, correction, and guidance,
help me to confirm Your voice
in times of praying with the Scriptures.
Help me to feel confident
in knowing that I hear Your voice.
Amen.