

HOMILY OF ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE, APOSTOLIC NUNCIO
MONDAY OF THE 4TH WEEK OF EASTER
CATHEDRAL OF THE RISEN CHRIST
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA
MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2018

Good morning! I am Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of Pope Francis to the United States. In his name, I greet all of you and assure you of his special prayers and love for you – the members of the flock of Christ. The Pope is the chief shepherd of the Catholic Church. Your bishop, Bishop Conley, helps the Pope shepherd all the People of God in Lincoln. Your priests here at the cathedral are shepherds too, helping the bishop care for you.

I too help the Pope proclaim the Good News as an ambassador. When I was a young priest, I was first sent all the way to New Zealand! In New Zealand, they play rugby and they take care of a lot of sheep. It is important for the shepherds there (and everywhere) to protect the sheep, to watch out for them, to feed them and care for them. A good shepherd knows his sheep, and he calls them. They recognize his voice and they follow him.

In our Gospel today, just as yesterday, we hear Jesus, the Good Shepherd, speak. *The sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has driven out all his own, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him, because they recognize his voice.* How beautiful – to hear the voice of Jesus!

Even when we are in our mother's womb, we begin to recognize her voice and our father's voice. Little by little, we get to know the voices of our brothers, sisters, and friends. The more we hear their voices, the more we recognize them. Sometimes, we can tell by how our mother or father calls us, by the tone of their voice, whether they are happy or sad, whether we have done the right thing or whether we are in trouble! The voice tells us so much, but Jesus' voice is unique.

To hear His voice, we need to listen. Sometimes He speaks to us through our parents, teachers, priests and even our friends. Other times, He speaks to us when we pray. Often when we pray, we tell Jesus what we need or what others need, but just like having a conversation with our friends, we also need to stop and to listen. When Jesus speaks to us, He has something important to say – something that will help us or challenge us to be better.

When Jesus calls us to follow him, we need to listen. Perhaps, we don't realize He is calling us. Other times, we pretend that we don't hear. It is just like when you want to be outside to play and your parents tell you to come in because it's time for supper or time to do your chores. Children pretend they don't hear, but they do; they just don't respond right away. Sometimes, we hear God calling us to do something good, to do something great, to be brave and do the right thing. Often, we respond to his voice, but a few times, because we put ourselves first or because we are afraid – afraid of failing, afraid of what other people will think or say, afraid that we won't do things perfectly – we pretend that we don't hear, or we simply refuse to listen.

But God is calling you to do something great! He already called you by name in baptism. He gave you life and made you one of his own flock. Have you sometimes heard the Lord's voice? Did he call you to follow him? One of the things about Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is that when

He calls us, He doesn't just leave us on our own. He walks with us and He gives us direction. Your priests and teachers here at the cathedral and the school do the same – they call you, but they also guide you gently, giving you instructions, and telling you (repeatedly) to follow directions. We need direction in our lives; otherwise, we get lost. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, leads us by His voice and by His example. He leads us to heaven!

Yes, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is calling you to do something great – for our Church and our world. First, he calls you to be His – to know that you belong to Him. He wants you to know that you belong to Him – you are part of His flock, the Church, His People. Second, he calls you to be his disciples – to learn from Him, especially through your bishop, priests, parents, and teachers, how to love one another and how to take care of each other as members of His flock.

But have you ever thought of what He is calling you to be in the future? We need to ask Jesus, "Who do you want me to be?" Most people, he calls to be husbands and wives and mothers and fathers. A few people he calls to be single. There are also those whom Jesus calls to be religious men and women, who serve the Lord and their brothers and sisters. Finally, there are those Jesus calls from his flock to serve the rest of the flock as priests. We should not be afraid to ask the question, "Who do you want me to be?" and we need to listen attentively for his answer.

Yes, Jesus the Good Shepherd calls you to greatness. He calls you to follow Him. He wants to give you a great gift: eternal life! He came *so that you might have life and have it more abundantly!*