

8. May 2022

## Identifying the voice of the Lord

Jn 10:27-30

*The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life; they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand. The Father, for what he has given me, is greater than anyone, and no one can steal anything from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.*

Recognise the voice of the Lord and follow Him... This is an ever valid indication, and it takes on particular importance in these times of turmoil in the world and unfortunately even in our Church. In these difficult days it is not enough to be pious, but we must also have the discernment of the spirits, since many of the shepherds of our Church are no longer leading the sheep to the good pastures and are adapting themselves to the spirit of the world. And we cannot hear the voice of Jesus as long as we listen to the spirit of the world, because the spirit of the world understands nothing of the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:14), but has itself as its goal.

How comforting and consoling is this word of the Lord: "I know my sheep and they follow me (...) they will never be lost and no one will ever steal them from my hand". Far beyond our own efforts, we can firmly count on God to protect His own and to watch over them, even in times of such turmoil. This is our security!

We, for our part, must take care that our hearts do not turn away from the Lord, that we do not allow ourselves to be carried away by the many seductions that come our way, that we do not neglect our spiritual life and take those steps that the Lord calls us to take.

How can we learn to distinguish accurately the voice of the Lord from the other voices that whisper to us?

First of all, the right meditation on the Word of God will teach us. It needs to be interiorised in order to bear fruit, for the words of God must not return to Him empty

(cf. Isa 55:11). Again and again we must listen to and read the words of Sacred Scripture, because they enlighten our thinking, are a light on our path (cf. Ps 119:105) and are an invaluable aid to the discernment of spirits, for, as the Letter to the Hebrews says: *"The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where soul is divided from spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgement on secret emotions and thoughts"* (Heb 4:12).

Since God himself is the Word (cf. Jn 1:1), his light enlightens us when we truly accept this Word. In this sense, it is important that we take it in not only with our understanding, but also with our heart.

The same voice of the Lord that speaks to us in his Word also resounds in the authentic teaching of the Church. It is the same Spirit who explains Christ's words to us with greater precision. However, at this point we must distinguish very well between what is really Church doctrine and what are the private opinions of certain theologians or hierarchs, or even false doctrines....

Only in the authentic doctrine of the Church can we really recognise the voice of Christ, which touches us in our love for the truth! Love for the truth does not tolerate vague statements, which can easily be misinterpreted. *"All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the Evil One."*, the Lord tells us (Mt 5:37). Just as Jesus shows us things in all clarity, so must the shepherds, in imitation of him, do the same. And if they do not do so, whether out of human respect, doubt or error, the voice of our Shepherd will no longer resound through them and, consequently, the sheep will not be able to follow them: *"They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him because they do not recognise the voice of strangers"* (Jn 10:5).

In order to remain intimately attached to the Lord, regular prayer, the inner exchange with Jesus, is necessary. We shall never overdo it! The more we cultivate a relationship with Him, the more our hearts will be focused on Him. This includes the reception of the sacraments, in which God concretely offers us the grace of His presence.

Through inner dialogue with Jesus, He will be able to speak to us more and more clearly. In this way, the unity of the Word of God, right teaching and fruitful prayer comes into being.

This unity in solid faith will then give us the certainty of being on the right path, and will enable us to distinguish the voice of Jesus from those that lead us astray.

Moreover, we can entrust ourselves in a special way to the Virgin Mary, who knew the voice of her Lord and perfectly fulfilled His Will.