

*A Few Words from Fr. Gary for Fourth Sunday of Easter - April 13, 2008*

This Sunday we celebrate what has been traditionally called: Good Shepherd Sunday. Usually we reflect on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. But as I was reflecting on the scriptures for this weekend I felt drawn to Jesus telling us that he opens the gate for His sheep and calls each one by name. They follow because they know Him and they recognize His voice.

Have you ever thought about the voices that you listen to on a daily basis? Is the main one the voice of Jesus? For many of us it is the voice of comfort. As we listen it may sound like; 'If it feels good do it! Just say no! It's my choice! Be good to yourself! I want it my way! Or sometimes it is the voice of negativity. It may sound like: I knew you were wrong! I told you it wouldn't work! Why do we have to change? Why are we so slow in changing, we need to try the newest approach. Everyone else does it, why don't we? Or maybe we hear someone blindly searching saying something like: "Can you hear me now? I don't understand? Unfortunately, we usually are looking in the wrong places and not listening to the Lord."

Jesus tells us: My sheep know my voice and they follow. It all begins by knowing the voice of the Lord. Think of how two people, who enter into the Sacrament of Marriage, come to know one another. They spend much time together sharing, caring, listening and loving one another. Jesus tells us we are to know Him and His voice in order to follow. In a world with so many voices what do we need to do to insure that we are following the Lord?

I would suggest that we can begin by looking at the relationship of marriage. In marriage, two individuals become a couple united as a sign of God's love for one another, their children, and the world. In order for their marriage to work they must be willing to listen and come to know their partner's voice on a daily basis. In marriage, the couple makes a covenant with God to live their lives in fidelity and love for one another. This means that they are committed to one another to listen and follow the voice of one another with God as the guide for their relationship.

If this is what it takes in marriage, then think of what it will take to insure that our ears are tuned into the Lord to hear when he calls? It takes much time and effort! Marriage relationships only work when the two give of themselves daily in their relationship. If God is to be at the center of our lives, then it means that we have to set aside time daily to be with God. Hopefully, you are doing this and if not are asking yourself how you can do this? I would suggest it is as easy as taking 15 minutes daily to turn to the Word of God. Each weekend we place in the bulletin a leaflet titled; '*Bringing Home the Word.*' In this leaflet there are reflections and the readings for the current Sunday and the weekdays. You could consider pulling out the bible to look up the readings to read and reflect on them. If you are looking for another way, you can pick-up a monthly subscription booklet, such as the ones we have in the front office called '*Living Faith.*' This has a reflection on one of the daily readings for each day of the week. Or you may want to go on the Internet to search for a daily reflection on the readings. You can search by entering '*Daily Prayer*' in an internet search engine. The most important part of this is taking the time to grow in our knowledge and understanding of the Lord on a daily basis.

**1<sup>st</sup> Communion:** Next week-end we celebrate 1<sup>st</sup> Communion. We have 12 children who have been preparing to receive Jesus in this special way. Let us this week pray for them so they may be ready to receive this most precious gift.

**Parish Picnic:** The parish picnic was a wonderful experience for all who attended. The Easter Egg hunt was a tremendous success along with the blowup ride for the children. The Pastoral Council are commended for providing such a wonderful event.

**Vocations:** This evening Sunday, April 13 we begin a World Week of Prayer for Vocations. I would like to invite all youth and young adults to a video reflecting vocational callings at 4:00 PM. Following the video we will have a discussion on vocations. Pizza and snacks will be provided to enjoy the video and sharing following.

**150 Year Celebration:** During this year our Province of Franciscans from the Sacred Heart Province are celebrating 150 years of ministry in the United States. This Wednesday April 16<sup>th</sup>, the friars from the area will gather at St Thomas Aquinas to host a prayer service at 7:00 PM. During this service we will renew our vows as a community and celebrate God's calling us to serve the area. We would like to invite all parishioners to join us as we celebrate God's goodness through our vocations. Following the service we will have an open house in the friary. Please consider joining us.

**Friary Meals:** The friars are looking for a person to cook lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week.