

John 10:22-30

The last couple of days our lectionary has drawn from John 10, a chapter that focuses on Jesus as our Good Shepherd. From our readings, we have learned that the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep and calls each sheep by name. Additionally, the Good Shepherd leads his sheep out. Finally, the Good Shepherd's voice is unique, a voice that resonates with each sheep. In short, there is a real bond between the Good Shepherd and his sheep.

Regarding the Good Shepherd's voice, how can we be certain it is his voice? Furthermore, how do we determine if the voice we hear is the Good Shepherd's, our own, or worse, the evil one's?

There are few guiding principles to determine whether the voice is that of the Good Shepherd. First, **is the voice consistent with the Church's teaching?** If it is not, you can determine right away that it is not the Good Shepherd's voice. God has revealed his will publicly via Sacred Scripture, the Church's Apostolic Tradition, and the Magisterium or teaching office of the Church. What we receive in prayer is private revelation. What we receive in private revelation must be consistent with public revelation.

Second, **we look at the direction of our lives.** God will speak to us in a consistent way. If we are moving toward the Lord, the voice of the Good Shepherd will encourage you. You will sense peace from the Lord's voice. The evil one, on the other hand, will sting, bite, and nag you as he wants to make your life miserable in Christ.

If you are moving away from the Lord, the voices of the Good Shepherd and the evil one act in the opposite way. The evil one will propose apparent pleasures, so you grow in vices and move away from God. The Lord will sting and bite your conscience to get your attention for conversion.

Finally, there is the **question of whether there is fruit.** Where is the voice leading you? If it is the voice of the Good Shepherd and you follow that voice, your heart will have joy, you will have peace and will love God more. If it is a voice other than the Good Shepherd (e.g. a hired hand such as the evil one), you will sense a nagging emptiness or lack of peace. In short, you will sense that "something is off" in your heart.

In short, we can discern the voice of the Good Shepherd by looking at three things: consistency with the Church's teaching (Sacred Scripture, Apostolic Tradition, and/or Magisterium), looking at the overall direction of your life (moving toward or away from the Lord) and looking at whether there is fruit of peace, joy, and love in your heart over time.

~St. Thérèse, pray for us!