

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

4th Sunday of Easter | For Sunday, May 12th, 2019

The Voice of the Shepherd

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa, BSC

Acts 13:14, 43-52

Revelations 7:9, 14b-17

John 10:27-30



A famous Christian speaker was coming to town. Many people packed into the hall to hear him. He began to speak about theological and spiritual topics, much to the amazement of the crowd. They were intently listening to every word he spoke. He spoke with perfect diction and eloquence and possessed a commanding presence on the stage. At the end of his speech, the crowd gave a wildly enthusiastic applause that lasted quite some time. To the delight of his crowd, he came back on stage and delivered his trademark encore: Psalm 23.

The speaker welcomed the applause. Yet, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed an old man with a cane walking down the center aisle towards the stage. Soon enough, this old man found himself on the stage walking towards the center. At first, the speaker was taken aback by the audacity of this old man. But then looking at the old man's meager appearance, he no longer felt a threat to his performance.

When the two shook hands at center stage, the old man asked, "May I recite that psalm for the crowd?" The applause started to slow down, and curiosity arose about this unexpected event. The speaker asked the crowd to take their seat and offered the old man his spot on center stage.

The house lights dimmed. The spotlights focused. The old man stepped to the microphone that a stagehand had just placed. Nervously, he introduced himself. The speaker could feel the vibe of the room fill with a combination of interest and discomfort. With his raspy voice, the old man began to recite Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd ..."

When he was done, there was absolute silence in the hall. Not a sound was heard nor movement made for several moments. Then, a snuffle from the back corner and then another. A woman started sobbing in the front row. The crowd did give a standing ovation, but it was not wild with enthusiasm, but rather one of relief and heartfelt gratitude. It was an uncanny response of awe and amazement that shocked the speaker. He rejoined

the old man at center stage and asked him, "How did you do that? I've traveled all across the world and spoke on the most famous stages, and never once have I seen the crowd respond like that. What did you do?" With a twinkle in his eye, the old man responded, "You see, sir, you know the psalm and you know it very well. But I know the Shepherd, and I know him . . . very well."

I love this story because it shows the difference between knowledge (the speaker) and wisdom (the old man) — not that these two are diametrically opposed to each other. Knowledge is born from books and lectures, wisdom from reflection on experience. The pursuit of knowledge offers the possibility of success and power; the pursuit of wisdom offers only struggle, accompanied later by respect.

I know the sound of my father's voice. It is distinct among others, not only because of its timbre. Of course, I've known him for all of my life, and yes, I can say that his voice has slightly changed as he has gotten older. But despite the aging of his vocal cords, he still speaks with gravitas, which used to terrify me as a child. Now, it forms and guides me. I recognize it not only in my ears, but in my heart. It is a sound that I cherish and will never forget.

Br. John-Marmion Villa, BSC

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LPi
2875 S. James Drive
New Berlin, WI 53151
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

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PRAYER

Holy and perfect God,

You know I want to be available.

Help that desire sink deeply enough into my being

for me to actually change

and to say no to at least one worthy, but not urgent, task today.

Give me the ability to be open to the life I am leading,

not the one I am planning to lead.

Amen.