

CHAPLAIN'S BULLETIN MAY 8, 2022



Dear Folks,

“My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27).” In chapter 10 of John we see Jesus talk about Himself as the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep and who brings the fullness of life. As we read this, it is good to keep in mind the background of Ezekiel 34, the shepherd chapter. In the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in John 6, there is explicit mention that Jesus has them recline and there is plenty of grass in the area. I wondered why the grass got a special mention, then I realized, “Who makes us recline in green pastures?” The Lord our Shepherd (Psalm 23). John is telling us that Jesus is feeding His people like a shepherd feeds his flock (Isaiah 40:11). Once again, the Old Testament foreshadows, and Jesus fulfills. This told the story in a way that people could recognize.

When Jesus said, “I know them” we might think that since He knows everybody, there was no need to say this. We must understand how the word “know” is used in the Bible, often meaning “Having a life-giving relationship with” someone or something. We see in Genesis 4:1: “The man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain.” Psalm 1:6: “For the Lord knows the way of the just, but the way of the wicked will perish.” Psalm 95:10: “Forty years I loathed that generation; I said: ‘This people’s heart goes astray; they do not know my ways.’” “Lord, Lord, open the door for us!’ but he said in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, I do not know you.’ (Matt 25:11-12).” We remember that in the Gospels many of the scribes and Pharisees had lots of knowledge but did not have a life-giving relationship with God. Stories can touch people deep down in their hearts in ways that philosophical explanations often cannot.

We are called to tell the Gospel story in such a way that people can recognize the voice of the Shepherd. Since we are all made to have a relationship with Jesus (Colossians 1:16) everyone who is open, who is willing, can be touched if approached well. The challenge is to develop the art of telling the story. It doesn’t have to be the whole story, and it doesn’t have to be much. We remember that God’s plan is much larger than we are, and we might be a very small part of how He is working to touch a particular person. If we learn something new about our faith and share it, or if we tell someone one good thing about our faith community, we have shared good news. Enough raindrops can make a flood.

In Acts of the Apostles, we learn how the early Church spread the Gospel. One of the things they did was tell the story of Jesus, and the two biggest story tellers were St. Peter and St. Paul (two great examples are Peter in Acts 2 and Paul in Acts 17). We also see something very interesting with their storytelling. St. Peter has an experience of God teaching him something using a blanket full of critters and a lunch invitation in Acts 10. Then, in Acts 11, he tells the story of what just happened, in part repeating word for word what we had just read of the same story. We see St. Paul in Acts 9 having an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Later, in Acts 22, he will tell the same story, repeating much of what we have already read. Why the repetition? It is certainly not because the sacred author was paid by the word. Writing was laborious and paper was expensive, so they would not pad the text with anything that was unnecessary. I suggest to you that it is done this way to drive home the point that part of telling the story of Jesus is telling the story of what Jesus has done in our lives. The story of salvation continues, and it includes us. What story could you tell about how your relationship with Jesus got you from where you were to where you are now? You never know who might need to hear it.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim