



Archbishop of Montreal

Homily
Sunday, May 3, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Easter - Year A (Jn 10, 1-10)

The Listeners Were Cut to the Heart.

The listeners were cut to the heart. Have you ever felt this way when hearing the word of God?

Have you ever been cut to the heart upon hearing the name of Jesus Christ?

Peter spoke to the crowd and told them about Jesus. He told them that the crucified one has risen from the dead. And they were cut to the heart. Our heart can be touched in a fleeting way, but it can also be touched in a profound way, in a lasting way that encourages us, that pacifies us, that guides us. We can be cut to the heart in a way that transforms our life.

When God touches our heart, when we open our heart to God who comes knocking at the door of our heart, when Jesus Christ who gave his life for us on the cross and who rose from the dead comes looking for us, comes to meet us, He comes with the power to cut to the heart!

During these last few weeks that we have been living in confinement, almost like during a long retreat imposed on us, have we allowed God to touch our heart?

Strictly speaking there is only one good shepherd: Jesus Christ. He works through inter-mediate, such as priests, but also through lay men and women, through those in consecrated life, religious men and women. But it is worth repeating that there is really only one good shepherd who is always at work. Whenever we meet a baptized person who bears witness to Christ, or a religious sister who consecrated her life, or a priest who speaks of God, the Good Shepherd is always present, and He cuts to the heart. This is because it is God who has the power to touch us in the depths of our soul.

Even if the word of God comes through one of the Lord's servants, when this word is pronounced it will touch the heart because God is at work in the heart. And it is God at work in the heart of the disciple who announces the Word of God to touch the heart of those who listen.

When Peter addresses the crowd by way of naming the name of Jesus and their hearts are touched, how is it possible? It is possible because God is at work in their hearts so that by hearing his word, they are deeply touched.

When we are touched in a passing way, it is probably a human word that has touched us. But when we are touched in a way that transforms our lives, when we are cut to the heart, then it is the word of God that has touched and enriched us.

In every moment when we speak with each other, even when physical distancing makes it difficult to meet another, to meet in society, in the Church, in the parish, in the community, in one's mission, the Good Shepherd is always present to care for each and every one of us.

In prayer, let us surrender ourselves to the Good Shepherd. In prayer, let us seek the Good Shepherd. In fact, God could have chosen to do everything without us, but in his infinite mystery, he chose to work through us.

Even though we feel limited in our actions, God is always with us and remains by our side. God desires more than ever to accompany us through the trial that this pandemic is for every-one of us. The Good Pastor wants to comfort us and support us in our personal life and in our family life.

When the de-confinement begins, when the economy, social life, and church life resume, let us not stop entrusting ourselves to the Good Shepherd to guide us with wisdom, generosity, and mutual care.

In the Gospel, Jesus himself invites us to pray without ceasing, telling us: "Ask and you shall receive." The Lord never leaves our prayer unanswered when we pray to him.

Perhaps the best way to explain this and give an example is how parents respond to children.

When children ask their parents for something, the parents always answer. But are the parents going to give the child everything he or she asks for? No! However, they will likely give something to their child.

When we ask God, sometimes we think that He has not answered us because he has not given us exactly what we asked for. But he did give us something. He gave us his presence. He gave us his peace, his grace. He always gives. He always answers our prayer.

Just as parents do not always answer their children in the way they want, God does not always answer our prayers in the way we would like. He answers in the way it is best. Just as parents who give the child what is needed, God always gives us what we need. The purpose of the prayer of petition is, in fact, not to inform God about what we need.

As St. Augustine said, the purpose of the prayer of petition is to open our hearts to what God wants to give us, because God knows our needs. God knows our thirst. God knows our pain. God knows our life! He wants to be present in our life, to enrich our life with His truth, His beauty, His goodness.

On this Good Shepherd Sunday, maybe we should take the time to ask God to come to the aid of our faith. We can do so with this beautiful prayer from the Gospel: "Lord, I believe! Come to the help of my faith!" We believe, but we are called to believe ever more.

Let us believe that the Good Shepherd takes care of us, every one of us. People are separated from us, such as a sick relative in the hospital or a family member for whom you cannot care as well as you would like. At this time, it is impossible, it is not allowed!

Parish priests long to take care of the people entrusted to them, reach out to the sick and the poor. At this time, they find themselves with new constraints!

There are religious communities that provide social or educational work. They would like to take care of young people, of youth, but now the confinement means all this limitation!

This is a special time to entrust to God, to whom we turn in our prayer, all those we carry in our hearts. We pray to the Good Shepherd for ourselves and all those around us.

We entrust to him those we carry in our hearts, the members of our family, those who are with us at home, those who are far away, those who are elsewhere, those who are in hospital. Let us advance on the path of faith by giving ourselves to daily prayer, more confidently, more decisively, more decidedly, and better motivated. Let us not hesitate to entrust in him all those we carry in our hearts, the members of our family, the members of our parish, the members of

the Church, the members of society, even the whole of humanity. With full confidence, we can entrust all of them to the Good Shepherd.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

† Christian Lépine
Archbishop of Montreal