

## **HOMILY 4<sup>TH</sup> Sunday EASTER**

### **April 26, 2026**

I was reading about sheep this week. Sheep learn to know and recognize their shepherd, the one that makes sure they get food and water, he takes care of them and protects them, and they will follow him. In fact, sometimes two flocks come together so that one of the shepherds can watch both flocks for a while. The sheep all intersperse with one another and they all look alike. You would think that it would be difficult to separate them again, but it is not. When the shepherd comes back, the sheep know his voice and only the sheep that belong to his flock will follow him. The sheep of the other flock will not. We need to be careful whom we follow.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus uses an analogy. He tells us that he is the Good Shepherd and we need to recognize his voice and follow where he leads. Jesus is the one who loves us, provides for us and takes care of us like no other. How do we come to know the voice of Jesus? We can learn a lot from the Gospels so we should read them and pray with them. The more we come to know how Jesus worked in our lives in the past, the more we will be able to identify Him in the future. Keeping in mind the new commandment that Jesus gave us “Love your neighbor as yourself,” goes a long way. The question, “what would Jesus do?” is a good one. It used to be on wrist bands and is now kind of cliché, but maybe we should be asking ourselves this more. When I ask myself that question, I usually know the answer. And our new Pope Leo has been in the news a lot recently. His message of peace, welcoming everyone into the Catholic Church, living a moral life and treating all people with dignity sounds a lot like what Jesus would do. I think we can follow him. And our new Archbishop Weisenburger, leading us to a Church in the Archdiocese of Detroit where we will have vibrant parishes, flourishing priests and a Church that can continue the ministry of Jesus Christ. I think I can follow that.

And we need more good spiritual leaders. We need to encourage our young men to become priests. The priest shortage may be partially related to the fact that we are having fewer children. Parents have a great deal of influence regarding the vocations their children pursue. Parents used to encourage at least one of their sons to become a priest. Now I have had

many parents tell me that they do not want their sons to become priests. They want grandchildren. There is no particular priest type. Priests have all different backgrounds, doctors, engineers, nurses, attorneys, truck drivers, tool and die makers. I think priests just need to love Jesus and want to lead others to him. The ministry is so varied that priests do what they like and are good at it and can find other people to do the rest. I have tried a number of things in my life and this is the best. Of all the things I can spend time doing, I am the happiest and most fulfilled when I am doing my ministry. How many of you can say that about your job? Our twenty something's are finding Jesus and following him. Maybe they will follow him into the priesthood. That gives me hope.

I believe that joining a Catholic community is really important in recognizing the voice of Jesus and following him. I would encourage you not to be a "Roman Catholic," you know what I mean, roaming all over. It is important that you find a parish where you feel comfortable and commit to that community. Get to know some of the people and get involved. And coming to Mass regularly is important. It keeps us on track. We can rationalize any behavior to ourselves that we want. I am looking for healthy leaders outside of religion and I am not finding many. The negative influences are all over the media and they influence our behavior. I have talked to a number of people recently that told me that they stopped going to church during COVID when public Masses stopped and did not go back when they resumed. Their life made a bad turn and they started down an immoral path. It seemed ok at first. Everybody is doing it. I have to take care of myself. I am not responsible for other people. They got off track and their lives became a mess. They were very unhappy with the person they became. They tell me that they need to get back to church to get their lives straightened out. When we join together, we have a really positive effect on one another and can keep each other on track.

Get to know the voice of Jesus and follow him. Follow our Church leaders that are leading you toward Jesus. Join a Catholic Community that can keep you on track. Encourage young men to become priests and our spiritual leaders of the future. Continue the mission of Jesus Christ.