



***Fourth Sunday of Easter***

***Acts 2: 14, 36-41 1Peter 2: 20-25 John 10: 1-10***

Today we have a meditation from the Gospel of John on leadership.

Jesus begins with a parable.

This follows the story of the blind man (vs 1-5) and his cure. Jesus had pointed to lack of discernment shown by the spiritual leaders and their attachment to the letter of the law at the expense of the spirit.

The Pharisees had challenged Jesus, "Are we also blind?" Jesus continues using a parable. Shepherds are guardians who must be vigilant at all times. If you see someone approaching the flock in a stealthy manner it is probably not the shepherd. The sheep need to see the approach of the shepherd so that they have time to recognise their own leader.

The flock can recognise the genuine shepherd. That was illustrated in the case of the blind man. He was able to distinguish between the slick arguments of the community leaders and the actions of Jesus. The voice of leadership must bring Good News.

The parable speaks of a mixed flock. Our communities today are mixed in the sense that conflicting images of church abound. Not different images but conflicting images. Some strive to put into practice the directions of the two documents on the Church that came from Vatican II, while others seek to restore the church to a previous age which is perceived to be more "authentic".

We have the task of learning how to recognise the voice of the Spirit in our times. Vatican II which was an assembly of all the official teachers of the church proclaimed a new way of viewing the tradition in the light of the Gospel and the signs of the times. To put aside the teachings of Vatican II is to say that you know better than the collegial body which is the highest teaching authority we have. God is present with us that is God's promise.

The parable is followed by an explanation of the symbol of the Gate. Gates come in all sizes from elaborate two metre constructions to little picket structures you can step over. Whatever its size a gate is a marker, it signifies a change, a crossing place. To enter a gateway is to make a decision.

Jesus calls himself the gate. He is the model for our approach to others. We are to meet others with compassion, with hospitality, with dialogue and with healing. using our contact with others as the awareness of the presence of God, a moment of grace.

The second use of the image of gate is that it opens the way of salvation. Our comings and goings are by way of the saving life death and resurrection of Jesus. In the letter of Peter, we observe an ancient world view which considered slavery a

natural stratum of society. We know that slavery of any sort contradicts the freedom of the children of God proclaimed by Jesus

The gospel of hope which is our living treasure can remind us that, whatever slavery or brokenness we are experiencing, be it alcohol, gambling, violence or despair, Jesus saving love remain with us encouraging and calling us to freedom. The gate that is Jesus is always open.

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