

## SO MANY VOICES

(Each day we hear hundreds of voices. Are we hearing the most important one?  
Are we listening for the voice of Our God?)

Do you realize that on any given day you literally hear words from hundreds of different voices—everyday. Do you like the GEICO gecko? Or perhaps you prefer the Progressive Girl for your car insurance. What about that commercial with the man and woman each in their own bathtub looking out towards the horizon? All those are advertisements trying to sell us something, something that they would like us to think we truly need. Or, at least they would like to convince us that we truly need their product. You recognize their voices—often. There are promos for new shows on TV and cable beckoning us to tune in. Every Ad is a voice. On the radio. On the Internet. Everything you read is actually a voice except you are hearing by reading—in magazines, newspapers, books. Every coupon you cut is calling out to you. Every discount you pursue or sale you enter upon has called out to you and invited you to “Come and see.”

There are emails, letters, notes, memos, conversations, banter, small talk, meetings, conferences, conference calls. You have your landline telephone and your cell phone. That, of course, includes texting and perhaps tweeting. It opens you up to all the voices on Facebook and every video you watch on YouTube.

It has been said that a particular culture’s mental illnesses often reflect what happens when a culture goes awry and begins to lose its way. Ours is a culture dominated by many voices. As a result there are some people who can no longer tell which voice is which. Some can no longer identify the origin of the voices they hear and they begin to attribute voices to sources that are not there. We call such behavior schizophrenic. There are a lot of people today hearing voices that have a major impact on them but the voices are not always good voices.

Jesus says: “My sheep hear my voice.” Do you? Do you hear his voice? The answer is: Yes. You do hear his voice. Don’t ever doubt that. You heard it right here a few moments ago in the Scriptures. You are actually hearing it right now in my own preaching of God’s word to you. You will hear it later on at the consecration when Jesus bids you draw near to be fed. You hear his voice in forgiveness and blessing. Yes, you hear his voice. But what about specifically in your own life situation? What about in your own heart when you grapple with the thorny questions and issues of life? Do you hear his voice then? Do you hear his voice with consistency? With clarity? Do you ask to hear his voice? I mean, ask each day. Daily bread. That is how he taught us to pray—for daily bread, for the nourishment we need and the sustenance we need to get through the day. Are you

praying this way each day? “Lord, what do You want me to do—in this situation? Lord what do You want me to do—with this person? Lord, what do You want me to do—in this relationship? Lord, help me to listen for your response, for Your Voice.”

I submit that we profess faith in Jesus but actually when it comes to life’s situations we pretty much try to figure things out for ourselves or by using our own lights, our own experience, our own expertise. So, when it comes time to decide whom we should marry or where we should move or which job we should take or where our kids go to school we don’t always pray to the Lord asking specifically what the Lord wants us to do. We are afraid that if we pray that kind of prayer that we won’t like what we hear. That is false. No one wants the best for us more than Our Lord but we really do have to trust ourselves and our situations to him. In each situation, big or small, we have to develop the habit of asking: “Lord, what do You want of me in this situation?” And then we have to learn how to listen for the response.

God speaks in still, small whispers and if we do not shut down the myriad voices we encounter each day then our ability to hear His Voice is impaired. We must establish moments and places of silence in our lives. We don’t need to turn on the TV all the time or the radio every time we get in the car. The silence is not something to be frightened of. The quiet enables us to listen for that still, small voice. The silence enables the inner sensibility to emerge where we begin to sense what the Lord wants for us and of us.

In the Catholic tradition that is why we have tried to emphasize that at least here in Church there should be silence. This church is open all day, every day from early to late. People come here all throughout the day to visit, to sit in the shadows, to visit with their God in the Blessed Sacrament and to listen for the Voice of the One who loves us more than anything.

There is so much chaos, anxiety, and fear in our world and in our lives. There are too many contradicting voices calling us always to more. The Catholic faith calls itself Catholic in the sense of it being truly universal; catholic, in the sense of being open to all. We must recognize that this will inevitably involve sacrifices on our part where we do without so that others will be able to have some. The Catholic ethos is one of contentment often not with the most we can have but with a sufficiency and an abiding trust in the Lord. Our culture’s voices are always calling us to more, an indiscriminate more. But is that what the Lord is calling us to? What sayeth the One who was born in a stable and when buried was placed in another man’s grave? What does he say to us today about always needing “more?” Are we listening? I mean, really listening?