

Statement for Website
From Fr. Michael Basque

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When I was a boy we could get eleven different television stations (if you turned the aerial in the right direction): three each from Buffalo and Rochester NY, two from Toronto and one each from Barrie, Peterborough and Hamilton. On some Saturday nights, we could switch between two Hockey Night in Canada broadcasts (Toronto usually carried the Leafs' game while Peterborough broadcast the Canadiens). I was amazed how I could listen to so many different voices broadcasting the news from all these places. Today with cable television or a satellite dish and the right sports package you can follow eleven different hockey games at the same time. You can watch a news broadcast from the other side of the world. The number of voices out there to which we can listen is growing exponentially. But, how many of them can we trust?

In today's Gospel, Jesus says the sheep follow the shepherd because they know his voice but run away from the stranger "because they do not know his voice". The relationship between sheep and their shepherd was mutually beneficial. The sheep followed the shepherd because he led them to new sources of food and water as well as protected them from predators. Since the shepherd depended upon the sheep for his livelihood (milk, meat and wool) it was in his interest to sustain and protect the flock. A stranger was not concerned about the welfare of the flock or the shepherd but only his immediate benefit. A stolen sheep was a source of food or cash. For this reason, it was vital for both the sheep and shepherd that the voice of the latter be recognized by the former. A stranger might seek to imitate the voice of the shepherd in an attempt to get the sheep to follow him. The ability to distinguish between a true and false voice could potentially be a matter of survival.

During this Covid-19 pandemic we have been hearing many voices speaking to us about our situation. Everyone seems to have an opinion about when and under what conditions the restrictions put in place to stop the spread of the virus should be relaxed and the economy slowly restarted. While it is wise to get information from a variety of sources and everyone is entitled to their opinion, it goes without saying not all of these voices are speaking the truth or concerned about the common good. As I have written in other posts we need to listen carefully to what is being said, consider the credibility of the source, resist the urge to respond immediately and proceed with caution and forethought. After these issues are important and for some people are a matter of life and death. So how do we navigate through the cacophony of voices out there and hear the one we need to hear?

Catholics and other people of faith understand the challenges involved with this process. Throughout history, religious traditions have struggled against voices who have tried to dilute or pollute the truth about their teachings. Christians know ideas opposed to what Jesus taught and were handed down through the apostles have led to serious divisions in the Church. At times a large percentage of people including influential leaders accepted these propositions. Yet, as time passed, the truth became clear. Perhaps, this is the lesson Catholics and other people of faith can contribute to this process. There are times when decisions must be made immediately. On some of those occasions, the choice will be the wrong one. As the weather gets nicer and the economy

slows down, the urge to move quickly can seem unstoppable. Perhaps, it might be wise to move no faster than we must.

There were likely times when the sheep had difficulty hearing the voice of the shepherd. It might have caused them to pause a moment. That pause might have saved their lives.