

Salt & Light

Being “Sheep” Who Hear Jesus’ Voice

In the Gospel of John, Jesus called us to be “sheep” who hear: “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish” (10:27-28).

Are you a sheep who hears Jesus’ voice?

In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the US Catholic bishops emphasize the importance of hearing God’s voice—in particular, “the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil” (no. 17).

Another name for this voice is “conscience”—our “most secret core and sanctuary” where we are “alone with God, whose voice echoes” in our depths, revealing “that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 16). Each one of us has this “secret core and sanctuary” where we can hear God’s voice. Yet, as all of us who are still on the path to sainthood can attest, “hearing” doesn’t usually come naturally—it’s something we work at for our entire lives.

When we have important decisions to make, such as deciding which candidates, policies, or platforms we should best support as Catholics and US citizens, forming our consciences becomes all the more important—especially during an election season when candidates, parties, and super PACs spend millions trying to convince us that their side is right.

So how can we be sheep who hear?

First, in *Faithful Citizenship*, the bishops encourage us to begin with a sincere desire to embrace goodness and truth (no. 18). We *don’t* engage in conscience formation simply to reaffirm or justify a conclusion we’ve already reached.

Second, we are called to study Sacred Scripture and the moral and social teachings of the Church. Third, we must carefully examine facts and background information about various choices before us. Finally (and really, throughout), we must pray and reflect, seeking to discern God’s will. Conscience formation is a lot of work—but it’s a must for anyone serious about trying to hear and follow Jesus’ voice.

So let’s get to it.

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