

Fourth Sunday of Easter, Cycle C
Acts of the Apostles 13:14, 43-52
Psalms 100:1-2, 3, 5
Revelation 7:9, 14B-17
John 10:27-30
April 17, 2016
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The Garaventa Center
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I remember years ago when I was still a seminarian, being invited to Corby Hall at Notre Dame for dinner with the Holy Cross priests and brothers. I ended up sitting at a table with members of our order who were professors in variety of disciplines, and a distinguished guest from France. In the course of the meal, the guest began telling a funny story -- in French. I recall being pleased that I was getting the gist of the story as he went along. It was about a meeting between Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle and Charlie Chaplin. It felt good to be keeping up in such illustrious company.

Then suddenly the punch line arrived, and I missed it completely. I didn't understand a single word of it. Everyone else at the table was laughing heartily, and there I sat, totally lost. Some of the others were looking at me with pity on their faces, and before I could explain that I'd only missed the punch-line, a couple of them broke off the general conversation to explain the whole story to me, while the others looked excruciatingly bored. I was feeling so humiliated that I missed the punch line *again*. If anyone knows it, please write the Garaventa Center and let me know -- preferably in English.

Our readings at this Mass are all about listening. In our First Reading, for example, virtually the whole city of Antioch turns out to hear

the word of the Lord. If Jesus, our Savior, is the *Word* of God, then clearly, for a Christian, listening is extremely important. God is speaking to each of us in the Gospel. If we don't listen, if we are not attuned to God's voice, we can be lost -- lost in a far more profound sense than I was during that French dinner conversation.

Listening isn't easy. It's been claimed that:

We hear half of what is said.

We understand half of what we hear.

We believe half of what we understand.

We remember half of what we believe.

This can prove to be a problem for students around final exam time. It also doesn't give God's Word much of a chance to break through and transform our lives.

The first rule of being a good listener is to stop talking. We can really only do one thing well at a time. We can talk or we can listen. So, if we want to listen well, we must stop talking. Obviously, I don't mean we should stop talking to other people. I mean when we are listening to the Word of God, we should stop talking to ourselves.

We all do this. We have a kind of nonstop monologue going on in our heads. While the Gospel is being read, we are wondering what that person three rows over could possibly see in that fellow she's with, or why Obi-Wan Kenobi didn't remember R2-D2 and C-3PO in "A New Hope," or why the presidential candidate we regard as the obvious choice isn't more popular. Then suddenly the priest is saying "The Gospel of the Lord," and everyone is responding, "Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ," and

we realize we haven't heard a word. We've missed the most important punch line in the world.

In our Gospel today, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice." So let's try to stop talking to ourselves, and tune in to what the shepherd has to say.