



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

REGINA CAELI

St. Peter's Square

Fourth Sunday of Easter, 21 April 2013

[Multimedia]

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Good morning!*

The Fourth Sunday of the Season of Easter is characterized by the Gospel of the Good Shepherd — in chapter ten of St John — which is read every year. Today's passage records these words of Jesus: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (10:27-30). These four verses contain the whole of Jesus' message; it is the nucleus of his Gospel: he calls us to share in his relationship with the Father, and this is eternal life.

Jesus wants to establish with his friends a relationship which mirrors his own relationship with the Father: a relationship of reciprocal belonging in full trust, in intimate communion. To express this profound understanding, this relationship of friendship, Jesus uses the image of the shepherd with his sheep: he calls them and they recognize his voice, they respond to his call and follow him. This parable is very beautiful! The mystery of his voice is evocative: only think that from our mother's womb we learn to recognize her voice and that of our father; it is from the tone of a voice that we perceive love or contempt, affection or coldness. Jesus' voice is unique! If we learn to distinguish it, he guides us on the path of life, a path that goes beyond even the abyss of death.

However Jesus, at a certain point, said: "my Father, who has given them to me..." (Jn 10:29), referring to his sheep. This is very important, it is a profound mystery, far from easy to understand.

If I feel drawn to Jesus, if his voice warms my heart, it is thanks to God the Father who has sown within me the desire for love, for truth, for life, for beauty... and Jesus is all this in fullness! This helps us understand the mystery of vocation and especially of the call to a special consecration. Sometimes Jesus calls us, he invites us to follow him, but perhaps we do not realize that it is he who is calling, like what happened to the young Samuel. There are many young people today, here in the Square. There are large numbers of you aren't there? It's clear.... Look! Here in the Square today there are so many of you! I would like to ask you: have you sometimes heard the Lord's voice, in a desire, in a worry, did he invite you to follow him more closely? Have you heard him? I can't hear you? There! Have you wanted to be apostles of Jesus? We must bet on youth for the great ideals. Do you think this? Do you agree? Ask Jesus what he wants of you and be brave! Be brave! Ask him this!

Behind and before every vocation to the priesthood or to the consecrated life there is always the strong and intense prayer of someone: a grandmother, a grandfather, a mother, a father, a community.... This is why Jesus said: "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest", that is, God the Father, "to send out labourers into his harvest" (Mt 9:38). Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit. I am pleased to stress this today, which is the "World Day of Prayer for Vocations".

Let us pray in particular for the new Priests of the Diocese of Rome whom I have had the joy to ordain this morning. And let us invoke the intercession of Mary. Today there were 10 young men who said "yes" to Jesus and they have been ordained priests this morning. This is beautiful!

Let us invoke the intercession of Mary who is the Woman of the "yes". Mary said "yes" throughout her life! She learned to recognize Jesus' voice from the time when she carried him in her womb. May Mary, our Mother, help us to know Jesus' voice better and better and to follow it, so as to walk on the path of life! Thank you.

Thank you so much for your greeting, but greet Jesus too. Shout "Jesus" very loudly.... Let us all pray together to Our Lady.

After the Regina Caeli:

I am following closely the events in Venezuela. I accompany them with deep concern, with intense prayer and with the hope that an effort will be made to seek and find the right and peaceful paths to surmount the moment of grave difficulty which the country is going through. I ask the beloved Venezuelan people, and in particular those in charge of institutions and the political leaders, to reject firmly every form of violence and to establish a dialogue based on truth and on mutual recognition, in the search of the common good and in love for the nation. I ask believers to pray and work for reconciliation and peace. Let us unite in a prayer full of hope for Venezuela, putting it

in the hands of Our Lady of Coromoto.

A thought goes to those hit by the earthquake that struck a southwestern region in continental China. Let us pray for the victims and for all those who are suffering the effects of this violent quake.

Fr Nicolò Rusco will be beatified this afternoon in Sondrio [Italy]. He was a priest from the Valtellino who lived between the 16th and 17th centuries. For many years he served as an exemplary parish priest in Sondrio and he was killed in the political and religious unrest that was troubling Europe in that time. Let us praise the Lord for his witness!

I greet with affection all the pilgrims who have come from various countries: families, many parish groups, associations, candidates for confirmation and schools. I greet in particular the many young people from the Diocese of Venice, accompanied by the Patriarch; but remember, boys and girls: you must bet on life for the great ideals! I greet the catechists of the Diocese of Gubbio, led by their bishop; the community of the Seminary of Lecce with the diocesan altar servers; the representatives of the Lions Club of Italy. On this "World Day of Prayer for Vocations" which was born 50 years ago from an intuition of Pope Paul VI, I invite you all to say a special prayer so that the Lord will send numerous labourers into his harvest. St Hannibal Mary Di Francia, an apostle of prayer for vocations, reminds us of this important commitment. I wish you all a good Sunday!

Have a good Sunday and a good lunch!