

the bar, and started again in pain. He continued to push hard and require very difficult things of this little girl. When she won the gold medal, she did not run first to her parents - she ran straight to her coach and gave him a huge hug.

The same sort of thing is going to happen in heaven for anyone who had a pastor who required that they live the truth, that they go to Confession, that they get themselves out of sin, who told them the hard truth but told them the truth nonetheless.

If that is what helped them get to heaven, they will be eternally grateful. But for every bad pastor who refuses to preach the truth because they want to be liked by the people, for every one who allows general absolution or any other sinful practice, for every one who instead of requiring virtue and holiness of the people are actually encouraging them to do things that are not right, then in hell where both will be - there will be a line waiting to condemn that priest or bishop for allowing such things to happen.

We have to make sure that we are following the right shepherd. We have a Good Shepherd, and none of us is going to be able to stand before the Lord and say, "But Father said it was okay. The bishop didn't do anything about it, so it must have been okay." The Lord will look at you and say, "I'll deal with that priest or that bishop when they get here. You, on the other hand, knew better, and I'm going to hold you responsible for what you knew." We know the truth. It is written in our hearts and on our minds; we are without excuse. It would be easy to look around and say, "But look at all the other Catholics who aren't doing what they're supposed to do!" God will deal with them, but each one of us will have to stand individually before the Lord, Who is our Shepherd, for judgment. He will look at each one of us and say, "You knew. You knew Me. You knew what truth I preached." The question

is - Did we choose to listen to His voice and follow Him? Or did we choose to listen to someone else's voice and follow them because it was easier, more convenient, more politically correct, more fun, whatever it might be?

In the second reading today, we heard that the Lamb Who was seated in the middle of the throne is going to be the Shepherd and is going to lead them to life-giving waters. We need to follow that Lamb Who is also the Shepherd. We need to seek His voice, we need to hear Him, and we need to follow Him. It is not an option for us, but rather it is our salvation. We need to be serious about this whole matter. There are many voices out there that tell us, "You can do whatever you want because you're going to heaven anyway. All you have to do is believe in Jesus and you're set for life." Jesus did not say that. Scripture never says that. The Church has never taught it in 2,000 years. It is not true, but it sure makes it a whole lot easier - until we wind up in hell. The Good Shepherd is the One who is going to preach the truth, because the Good Shepherd is the Truth. And He has given us the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, which means to lead us into the fullness of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is not beyond anyone of us, but in fact it is incumbent upon each and every one of us.

We need to spend time in silence. We need to hear His voice speaking in our hearts. And we need to embrace Him Who is the Truth because He has made very clear in the Gospel reading that His sheep hear His voice, they recognize it, and they follow Him.

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## **Public Sin and the Reception of Holy Communion**

**Fr. Robert Altier**

### Readings for Mass

First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43-52

Responsorial Psalm:

Psalms 100:1-2, 3, 5

Second Reading: Revelation 7:9, 14-17 Gospel:  
John 10:27-30

In the Gospel reading today, Our Lord tells us that His sheep hear His voice and they follow Him. Now when we stop to think about hearing the Lord's voice, it is difficult for most of us because there are so many other voices vying for our ear; what is even worse, there are so many other voices that are trying to be our shepherd. If you just think about the typical day of the average American, many people wake up to the radio, they have the radio on in the bathroom, they have the TV on near the breakfast table, they have the radio on in their car, the radio is on at work, the radio is on again in the car on the way home, the TV is on when they get home, and many people go to sleep with the TV on. Not one minute of silence in the entire day. And the voices that are speaking to so many people are voices that are telling them to do things that are wrong, leading them astray, leading them either more deeply into themselves or more deeply into the profligate way of life that America has now become famous for. What is happening to so many people is they are being led astray, so we need to look seriously at this question of hearing the Lord's voice.

He tells us that His sheep know Him and they follow Him. So we can ask ourselves, "Are we following Christ?" It is not a question of whether we come to church, the question is - Do we follow the Lord? Do we follow Him in our day-to-day lives? Do we seek His voice to know

and to discern what it is that we are supposed to do? How much silence is there in our lives today? If you think back just a hundred years ago and for all human history prior to that, it was almost entirely silent. The only thing that was not silent in a person's day was when they would actually have a conversation with another human being; otherwise, they had time for silence. The average American today wants to do everything possible to make sure there is no silence in their day. We are dealing with generations of sensory overload. People today, if they even have a few moments of silence, begin to get fidgety because they are so unaccustomed to being silent and to listening to God in the silence of their hearts that as soon as there is a little bit of silence they immediately try to find something to erase it. Each one of us needs to have silence in order to hear the Lord's voice because He speaks in the silence of our hearts.

He has also given to us shepherds to be able to speak to us to lead us along the way, but we have to choose who our shepherds are going to be. As I said, there are many voices that are speaking to us. And if we were really serious, we would have to say there are many voices that are vying for our souls. Just think where the average radio and television person leads a person's soul. Is it towards Christ, or is it away from Him? I think we all know the answer to that. The real tragedy is that now even within the Church there are many voices that are leading us away from Christ. We have priests and bishops who do not stand for what is correct. They do not have the guts to stand up for Jesus Christ, but instead being politically correct is far more important.

We have bishops and priests now who refuse to deny the Eucharist to people who are in public sin. They refuse to make the distinction between private and public. For instance, if I knew that one of you was living a

sinful life and you came up to the communion rail, I would have to give you Holy Communion because, number one, I do not know if you have been to Confession; or even if I know that you had not, to deny you Holy Communion would cause a scandal because it would draw the attention to other people that what you are doing privately is now being made public. So unless I talk to you first and tell you, "If you come up to Communion, I will not give you Holy Communion," the Church says that even though it is a sacrilege on your part to receive Holy Communion if you are in the state of mortal sin, I would still have to give you Communion. However, if one is a politician who has a public record of being pro-abortion, pro-euthanasia, pro-human-cloning, if there is some other public exposition of your sin, like these unfortunate souls who show up all over the place with rainbow sashes telling people that they are practicing a homosexual lifestyle and demanding that they receive Holy Communion, at that point, it is a sacrilege on the part of the priest to give them Holy Communion because their sin is no longer private - it is now public. But there are many who do not want to cause waves, and so they refuse to stand up for Jesus; instead, being politically correct is what is more important.

The real tragedy is that, in the minds of most Americans, these are people who would be called "pastoral". The word *pastor* means "a shepherd". One who is truly pastoral is one who is going to shepherd the sheep rightly. What has happened, however, is that we have redefined *pastoral* to mean "somebody who is willing to let us get away with anything that we want". That is **not** being a good shepherd. When it came to things that were wrong, Jesus Christ did not remain silent. He taught the truth; He did not wimp out. He did not water it down; He told people exactly what was going to happen to them if they did not change their lives. We look at the first reading today with Paul and Barnabas; they did the same thing. They went in and preached the truth. And when the people rejected the truth, they did not back down and water it down and become politically correct;

they continued to preach the truth right up to the point when they were thrown out of town. Would that we had priests and bishops today who would do the same.

If we just stop and think about the mentality that is behind this kind of thinking - that to be pastoral is to tell people that it is okay to do whatever they want - it is the same mentality as the teenage kid who wants to do stupid things and unfortunately the parents, rather than disciplining the kid, encourage it. They buy the booze for the kid. They encourage the kid to do immoral things. They do not set any kind of standard or any kind of curfew. They let the kid do whatever he wants, hang around with whomever he wants, and all of his friends say, "Your parents are really cool. Mine, on the other hand, are mean because they won't let me do that. They don't want me going to parties where I'm going to be getting drunk and doing immoral things. But your parents are cool; they're with it!" Now anybody with two cents of a brain would say, "Obviously, these are not good parents. They are not doing what they are supposed to do. If they're trying to be their kid's friend, they're not being their kid's parent." But among the mindset of the other kids, they are being the best parents because they are letting the kids do whatever they want to do.

Ask yourself, "How many athletic teams have ever won any kind of tournament or any kind of championship because they had a coach who did not discipline them, who did not require any kind of work?" I remember many years ago watching the Olympics and there was a little girl who had won the gold medal in gymnastics. They were showing one of these close-up deals with her coach. The coach pushed this kid, and pushed her and pushed her and pushed her. One day, she fell off the bar and came down on her hand and jammed her fingers. This little girl was crying, and the coach said, "Get up. Get back on the bar." She started whimpering about her fingers, and he said, "Get up and get back on the bar." She got up, got on