



FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP
HOMILY NOTES
4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 17, 2016
“Forming Our Consciences”

Introduction

- Have you ever had the experience of being frustrated that someone just can't seem to “hear” what you are saying?
- Have you ever been on the other end—perhaps realizing, only after it was too late, that someone had been trying to tell you something that you simply were not able to hear?
- As humans, there can be physical, psychological, emotional, and other barriers that prevent people from truly hearing one another. How, then, can Jesus expect us to hear *his* voice, when we sometimes can't even hear other people?
- In today's readings, we see examples of those who do hear and follow Jesus's voice, and those who do not. Yet, Jesus calls all of us to hear and follow. How can we prepare our hearts and minds to be followers who hear?

First Reading: Acts 13:14, 43-52

- In the first reading, Paul, accompanied by Barnabas, is on his first missionary journey. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they are proclaiming the Gospel to the Gentiles in what is now modern-day Turkey. Paul and Barnabas are wonderful examples of hearing—and responding to—Jesus' voice.
- Through the efforts of Paul and Barnabas, many Gentiles come to believe in Jesus. But unfortunately, some Jews become “afflicted with jealousy” (v. 45) and persecute Paul and Barnabas, expelling them from the territory (v. 50).
- Paul and Barnabas boldly speak out, saying that “the word of God” had been spoken to the Jews, but they had chosen not to hear it (v. 46).

Gospel: John 10:27-30

- In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, “My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.” (v. 27-28).

Application

- We see examples in today's readings of those who have heard and not heard Jesus' voice. Yet, Jesus calls all of us to be sheep who hear.
- In their 2015 statement, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the Catholic bishops of the United States describe conscience as “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). The Second Vatican Council called conscience our “most secret



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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 of us, then, have this “secret core and sanctuary”--a place where we can hear his God’s voice.
- But conscience isn’t something that comes to us fully formed. Conscience formation is a process—one that we work on our entire lives.
- Forming our consciences is important, and it becomes all the more so when we have important, yet difficult, decisions to make, such as who to vote for in a local or presidential election. Also, hearing God’s voice can be very hard, especially in a moment when candidates, parties, and super PACs spend millions trying to convince us that their side is right.
- In these times, it is all the more important to form our consciences. How do we do so? In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the bishops remind us that forming our consciences includes:
 - Beginning with a sincere **desire** to embrace goodness and truth.
 - **Studying** Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church (as contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*).
 - **Examining** the facts and background information about various choices.
 - Prayerfully **reflecting** to discern the will of God (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 18).
- To help me form my own conscience, I am reading, and encourage you to read, the bishops’ statement, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, in full. It is available on the U.S. bishops’ website and the web address is in today’s bulletin.
- Over the next several months, I will be praying for you, and we can all pray for one other, that we may all seek goodness and truth, study Sacred Scripture and Church teachings, examine the facts and background information, and prayerfully reflect.
- We pray that we can be like Paul and Barnabas, hearing and responding to Jesus’ voice!

Bulletin Announcement

Catholics Care. Catholics Vote. Form your conscience.

In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic bishops urge Catholics to form their consciences through being open to truth, studying Scripture and Church teaching, examining facts and background information, and prayerful reflection (no. 18). Visit www.faithfulcitizenship.org to learn about the steps you can take to form your conscience, watch videos and access other great resources on conscience formation for faithful citizens.

Bulletin Insert

On April 16-17 weekend, parishes may also wish to use this [bulletin insert](#) (also [en Español](#)) on conscience formation, found in the “Parishes and Schools” section of www.faithfulcitizenship.org.



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