

Aids to Better Hear the Lord's Voice

Intro. After years of thinking people were mumbling, a friend recently got tested and found out there is a hearing deficiency; and that it runs in the family. With hearing enhancement, I can't get away with mumbling a comment. I am more careful what I say.

I. For years I didn't hear well. During high school and college, I wasn't listening very hard for the Lord's voice. Other things seemed more important: how I looked (mostly goofy); what I was wearing (not name brands); friends (I had some). At the same time, I struggled with what I was going to do with my life. Some people seemed to know. Not me. In college I met a priest with a zany sense of humor, kind of like mine. Think Monty Python. I

had never met a priest like him before; he was a person, not a holy card. He became my advisor. One day he suggested maybe God was calling me to be a priest. Nope! I had other ideas. He told me just to think about it. Over the next two years while I finished my degree, I did begin to listen more to find out if God was really calling me. I couldn't get a direct answer from God in my prayer, no clear sign. Neither did I hear anything saying *not* to do this. After several more years of hearing nothing, I got tired of listening and, so I challenged God: I'm going to do this if you don't stop me. I heard *more* nothing; *big* nothing. Finally, I realized I was listening for the wrong thing: the Lord's voice out of a burning bush or from heaven in a dream. He wasn't there. But when I looked back on my life, what I saw was more like a string of location "pins"

that marked the road that was my life. My life had turns that led me away from some things and towards other things. I noticed a clear direction: becoming a priest. I didn't have a guarantee any more than my brothers who got married did. Like them, I took the chance. I can't believe what God has done in my life once I started listening for his voice.

Concl. Because of all the noise in our world, hearing God's voice is hard. Twenty-four-hour news channels, social media, texts, phone calls; all compete for our attention. A friend used to keep his television on for background noise. Now we can buy expensive machines that make "white" noise to drown out *other* noise. We have less attention span than ever before, so advertisers must crank up the volume and multiply the images. How do we hear

the Shepherd call our names? Often, we don't; we can't. Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in last week's gospel, we aren't looking or listening for the Lord. To hear the Lord's call to any vocation - married, single or religious - we have to be listening every day. It doesn't take long, just a few minutes at the beginning and end of our days. Turn off the noise while getting ready for school or work; sit quietly for a few minutes. Recently, some of our friends preparing for Confirmation talked about wanting to pray more. It's not difficult; just talk with God like anyone else, then listen. This is how it starts and how it can lead to finding our vocation in life. It does work. But I think I'm going to get my hearing tested. At my age, I can't afford to miss anything else.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft, April 30, 2023