

## I KNOW THEM AND THEY FOLLOW ME

The scene is quite tense and conflicting. Jesus is walking inside the temple precincts, when a group of Jews surrounded him and questioned him in an unfriendly tone. Jesus was not intimidated and replied straight at them: "*I have already told you, but you do not believe because you are no sheep of mine.*" The evangelist adds that, when Jesus finished speaking, "*Jews fetched stones to stone him.*"

In order to prove that they were not his sheep, Jesus tries to explain to them what it means *to belong to him*. He mentions just two essential and necessary traits: "*The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice...and they follow me.*" Twenty centuries later, we Christians need to remember that what makes us members of the Church of Christ is listening to his voice and following in his steps.

The first requirement is the *ability to listen* to Jesus. It is needed in our Christian communities; a sensibility to capture Jesus' Words in all its freshness, as it is noticed in many simple Christian families. Pope John XXIII once said that "the Church is like an old village fountain that always had fresh running water." This twenty centuries old Church must always have the running water of Jesus' words.

The only way to insure that our Faith is not diluted progressively by taking forms of decadent religious fads, following the slogans, images and propaganda of our modern society, is to place at the centre of our communities the living Words of Jesus, the one and only Lord and Master.

Yet, listening to his Word is not enough. We must *follow Jesus*. The time has come for us to choose between one "bourgeois" religion which may satisfy our conscience but kills our joy, and living our Christian faith as passionate followers of Jesus.

This challenge means that we believe what He believed, we consider important what he said and practice, we defend the human rights as He did, we stand by the poor and the helpless like Jesus, we feel free to do the good he went about doing, we must trust in the Father like Jesus did, and we face life and death with the same hope and courage with which he lived and died.

And all those people who move around alone and disoriented will find a Christian community in which they are taught to live in freedom and dignified solidarity, as preached by Jesus; only then the Church will be offering to society the greatest of service.

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