

How To Hear The Voice of God By Father Anthony Co

Hi, I'm Father Anthony. today we're going to talk about how to hear the voice of god.

Jesus, as we know, is the good shepherd. The good shepherd has a voice so that his little sheep, us, can follow after him and listen to him. So it's important to realize that God wants to speak to us. Jesus has something to say.

I thought in this little reflection, we could focus our attention on the ways that God speaks to us and how we can better open our hearts to Him.

Before we do, before we go in this basic material, I thought I'd tell you a story of one of my friends. She's since moved on to another location, but she was a parishioner at my parish and after the baptism of her baby, as I was coming into the house for the party, she opens up the door and she goes, "Father Anthony, before you go inside, I want to tell you a story about something that changed my life."

I said, "Really? what?"

She said, "When you had a homily about two months ago, you had us in the middle of the homily, kneel down and listen for the voice of God. And I wanted to tell you that story. After mass, I was talking to my husband, and I said to my husband, "Did you hear anything when we were kneeling down to pray and asked God the Father how much he loves us?" and her husband said, "No I didn't hear anything." And she said, "I tried really hard, and I didn't hear anything either."

Then she's saying this as she's getting into her car, then all of a sudden, God wanted to speak to her. He allowed her in moment to experience His Grandeur - the grandeur of His might, of his Sovereignty, of His love. And in relation to her smallness - her significance, but her smallness, her imperfection, and her sin. She began to weep uncontrollably.

Can you imagine this? She just told her husband that nothing happened, and now she's weeping in the car. And as this was happening, another thing happens. God shifts her attention from his grandeur and his greatness and everything to His closeness; he comes close to her and allows her to experience how much he loves her.

All the tears went away, she was filled with joy. She said, "Father Anthony, it's changed my life. I can see how this is the greatest thing that can ever happen to a person - that God speaks to their sons and daughters." She said, "it was so great that I can see why people would sacrifice their lives -- their lives -- to follow God and seek His will. I'm so thankful that God spoke his will in my life."

Amazing! She just needed to hear the voice of God.

Now, how do we hear the voice of God? Well, I have my own categories...

Whether they're the best categories ever, I don't know, but I offer them to you. When I think about the voice of God, I divide it up three categories: one is the mind, two is the spirit, and three is the body.

Now, we are people with body and spirit, and it's all missed together as one, but I find it helpful to separate those things so I can focus on the ways that He is speaking to me.

So, how does God speak to us in the mind? Often times, in my life, He speaks to my mind through holy desires. He will put a holy desire into my mind and my heart, that will start to burn. Maybe that holy desire is to serve in a very particular way. Maybe that holy desire is to do a very specific thing that is one and done. But the Lord comes in holy desires that have messages in them: I want you to do x, y and z holy desires. Sometimes our Lord comes to us in our mind through highlighted images, words, sentences, memories or ideas. Let me give you an example of that...

Have You ever had the experience where you're sitting at church, the priest is preaching, and all of a sudden, it's as if he is speaking specifically to your situation. God is highlighting something in the preacher that is now in your mind and you can't get your mind off of it. Or you're reading the Scriptures, and all of a sudden, a line pops off the page and is fixated in your noggin - that is God highlighting something.

Sometimes God highlights memories. Let me give you an example... I was at a grade school and I was doing the Mass and teaching the kids to hear the voice of God and I asked them to ask God the Father to speak to them. And during the homily, I asked the kids to raise their hands and tell me what God said. And this one little boy said, "I had this image in my mind of a boat - a mighty boat - and it

was in this terrible storm, but no matter what the storm did, the boat wouldn't sink." And I said to the little boy, "Well, I can't tell you exactly what God was saying for you, but it seems to me that you are in that boat, and you will never sink no matter what." This one little girl said, "I saw this biiiiig heart," and I said, "You know I don't know exactly what God is saying to you, but maybe he's saying that's his heart for you."

And then I was so proud of the teacher. She raised her hand and she said in front of everyone -- this was so awesome. she said, "Father, I had the memory of when I was a child, I would sit on my father's lap in the rocking chair, and place my head to his chest and listen to his heart. and i would just rock back and forth until I fell asleep with my dad." I said, "You know, I can't tell you exactly what God was saying to you, but it seems like that's a beautiful image of you resting on His chest and listening to His heart."

God comes to us through holy memories, and I also group into the mind, open visions which happens to some people, or even dreams. You know, you go to bed, and God speaks to you through a dream. He can do it before, he can do it again.

The next thing I categorize into is the spirit. The spirit is the core of who we are. I notice several things happen within my spirit when God communicates to me. He causes joy. He causes peace. He causes renewal, and I also sense his presence. So peace often comes with the knowledge that it's going to be okay.

So this knowledge somehow God proves it to you that it is going to be okay, and it causes a calmness a rest-ness of the heart. It causes our spirit to rest in Him. Sometimes we experience Joy. Joy is delight of the spirit. We're in His presence and we experience joy. Sometimes it's renewal. There's heaviness to our live, and if he pulls off the heaviness that sometimes is in our head, and he sometimes pulls of the heaviness that' sin our heart, and finally, we sense His presence.

Now, I often - and I'm so thankful for this - can sense the presence of God in a room. It's - I don't know how to explain it completely, but my spirit is interacting with His spirit, and I just know He's here. I just know he's in this room. He interacts with our spirit.

The last thing I use as category is the body. God interacts with us and he communicates to us in the mind, in the spirit, but also in the body.

Some people experience electricity in their hands and their body, some people experience warmth, some people feel a great deal of rest and fall asleep in prayer, some people experience goose bumps on their arms.

The thing is that when God speaks to us in all these different ways, we have to trust that it is His voice to go forward to see when it's His voice.

When we start to see beautiful fruits like beautiful things happening like listening to the voice of God - when he puts something in our mind, does something in our spirit, or does something in our body -- then we begin to know that it is His voice, and soon, it becomes a way of life for us.

But I think what happens is that people get so afraid to make the first step. He inspires something in your mind like, "Call your aunt Ruth she might need a phone call," and you're not quite sure if it is a random thought or if it is Him, but really it's Him communicating to you so you try it out, you call your aunt Ruth, and she says, "I'm so glad you called me today, I was just having a rough day thinking about your uncle who passed away, my husband, and I just needed a little bit of cheering up, so thank you for calling.":

We just have to begin. We have to take that step to go forth as he speaks to our mind, our spirit, and our body. I thought that I could end this little talk with something that God is doing in my life particularly, and I'm still waiting for the whole thing to unfold, so let me share with you a little bit of the backstory....

My father is Chinese-Philippine. His father is from China, He emigrated to the Philippines, started a very small convenience store which was probably the size of most people's closet, and then eventually it grew from there.

So my father eventually ended up in the US, and he studied to be a surgeon. Since he was retired, and I think he retired at the age of 59, he's been doing surgical medical missions to the Philippines. So he'll go once a year for a month, a month and a half, and do some surgeries there for the poor. Beautiful thing! My dad is an amazing man!

Well, one year, I decided it was time to honor my father -- to show him, demonstrate to him that I care about his life, and that I wanted to see into one of the most important parts of his life, which was medicine. So I went with him on a medical mission to the Philippines, and it was amazing!

I got to see my dad, who is a rock star, do all sorts of surgeries. you know, they have different rules in the Philippines, so I just put on the same clothes as the surgeons, and I got to stand right next to my dad as he did wonderful surgeries and helped so many different people.

So here's the story I want to tell you: while I was in the doctor's lounge, I was just relaxing, probably eating some snacks or drinking some juice, and one of the local nurses was looking at something on her phone, and she was showing another nurse, and they were talking about babies, and I got a glimpse - and this is sad, it looked like a dead baby. So it perked my interest because I thought it was kind of odd. She came over and showed me that she had a picture of all the babies who were stillborn.

There were a whole bunch of them, and a lot of them were deformed. I said to them "Why did this happen? This is so sad." She said, "I believe that a lot of this is occurring because of a lack of prenatal vitamins." I said, "Women need vitamins for a pregnancy?" "Yeah, she said, they don't cost that much." I asked how much it cost. She said it cost between 5 to 7 US dollars.

I said, that's nothing. So those babies on your camera could be alive to this day if they had a little bit of vitamins. So that conversation stuck with me. It's been rattling in my brain for a number of years.

Another memory has come to my brain that God has highlighted for me.

And that was: my father came back two years ago, or a year ago, from a surgical mission, and he was telling me about it, he said, "You know, son there was a very sad situation. It brought tears to my eyes." I said, "Tell me about it." He said, "I found out after the fact that there was this woman giving birth to a baby, but she didn't have money, so they postponed her delivery 24-hours until her family could scrounge up money to pay for her delivery."

I was thinking about how much risk it put that baby and the mom and all that unnecessary suffering for that poor mom. He said, "It put tears to my eyes when I heard that." And I was so moved by my father who was moved by this experience.

Okay, one more thing: my family is from a very poor region from the Philippines. They were very fortunate. they started off with very little money when they were young, but God has been good, and they've worked their way, many of them immigrated to the US and many of them ended up in Manila, having really nice

jobs. There are a few who are left in the region, but was left behind was a little bit of land. By the end of my grandpa's life, there was some land. And it was divided up between the siblings, and they weren't quite sure what to do with it, so my aunt decided to give that land away to some Benedictine sisters. And the Benedictine sisters decided to build a hospital on that land for poor families.

Can you imagine how many lives it's going to save? So last week, my father flew to the Philippines for the grand opening, the blessing of it, and it is such a great joy to my family that this is going to be a part of the family legacy : this hospital to help the poor.

So I have all these things happening within my mind: I have the highlighted memory of that nurse, the highlighted memory of my father moved by that pregnant woman, and then I'm thinking about this hospital. I met the mother Superior, and I felt this holy desire growing within my heart, and the message and the holy desire was: you can solve a problem. You can save babies. You can help mothers. How can I do that?

“Son, I want you to provide prenatal vitamins for this hospital,”: and I said, “I think I can do that, Lord. But I'm a diocesan priest, with all sorts of different commitments and I don't have a lot of time to do other projects, and he said, “Don't worry, I'll make it possible. I'll bring you resources. I'll bring you advisors. I want you to make this thing happen.”

So now, I'm kind of in this in between stage, I'm so excited, and as the Lord is speaking to me, I see these message sand memories - these holy desires, and I can start to feel the spirit of God coming over my body and my heart, I start getting goosebumps on my arms, and I'm burning in my heart. This is the voice of God in my life.

So Im just going to ask you - there are a lot of people listening to this talk, to please keep this possible mission in your prayers. Babies need help, moms need help, especially in these poor countries. And we can be part of the solution.

This is the voice of God. I realize there are messages that I have to reflect on and pray on in my spirit, in my mind, in my body.

I realize that I can often times be deceived; I can be wrong about what I hear. But the only way to find out is to go forward, and when you go forward through the

prompting of the Lord as he speaks to you, and you begin to see beautiful things happening, you know it is the voice of God.