

A SERMON FROM ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

NEW CANAAN, CONNECTICUT

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[John 10:1-10](#)

“Whenever he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.” This verse is from today’s gospel and has deep meaning for me as I come to the end of the confirmation process. The sheep are faced with many different paths, but the shepherd knows his sheep and selected the path that would be best for them. The shepherd guides his sheep rather than forcing them to follow him. It is the sheep’s’ choice to follow their shepherd and it is our choice to follow Jesus.

The purpose of Confirmation is to help discern which spiritual path to pursue. When baptized, our religion is chosen for us. However, when we are confirmed, we are called to take the responsibility for our baptism. Our class has spent the past year discussing the role of Jesus in our lives, learning about other beliefs, and building a strong connection with each other. On May 21st, our class will be confirmed and will choose to be members of the Episcopal Church.

For me, the highlight of our year was the weekend we spent at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. During the evening, we were lead into the gigantic, pitch-black cathedral. The only form of light that we had was a tapered, white candle. As I walked down the long center aisle, I passed the huge stone pillars and the side chapels that lined the walls. I sat on the cool stone floor and stared into the heart of my flame.

The silence was deafening. At that moment, I felt the power of Jesus’ love inside of me. I felt calm and safe. Instead of talking to Jesus, I listened. I strained my ears for any hint of his voice. And then I heard him. I heard him crackling in my hands. He was the candle. He was the light that I focused on. Jesus was the light that blocked out all of the distractions.

The following morning, as we left the cathedral, we were bombarded by the sounds and sights of the city. Different languages could be heard

along sidewalks and the beeping taxis sped down the streets. This cacophony immediately shattered the serenity I experienced. I questioned how I might hold on to the moment I had the night before.

After I came back home, I was surrounded with the stresses of tests, quizzes, tremendous amounts of homework, and my mom's "loving" demands to fold the towels. All of these distractions made me forget what I had learned at St. John the Divine. But soon, I remembered of how I felt then and needed to feel now. I took a deep breath in and on the breath out; I released everything that was bothering me. By looking inside myself for Jesus, I understood how to conquer the problem. He steered me in the right direction.

I also realized how fortunate I really am. My spiritual journey has given clarity to my life's journey. I hope

to positively impact the world and make people's lives easier to live. Already I have started working on accomplishing this goal. I now sponsor a 15 year-old girl named Sawsan who lives in Cairo, Egypt. Her country has recently gone through tremendous turmoil. Despite the harsh conditions that she experiences every day, Sawsan continues to write to me and remains positive. In one of her letters, she wrote, "I wish you and your family health and happiness." Sawsan has hugely impacted the life I lead today and will always be my friend.

Through the Confirmation process, I came to realize that Jesus lives inside of each and every one of us. As life presents challenges, we need to rely on his love and light to show us the way. The Good Shepherd wants to lead us. With this knowledge, I am ready to follow Jesus and follow the path that he has prepared. I invite you to join me. Amen.