

Scripture Study

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Jeremiah 23:1-6

(Psalm 23:1-6)

Ephesians 2:13-18

Mark 6:30-34

Overview of the Gospel:

- In last Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus sent out his twelve apostles to perform in his name all that he himself had been doing (Mark 6:7-13).
- After a brief interlude in Mark's gospel where he relates the martyrdom of John the Baptist (verses 14-29), the apostles return from their missionary journey. Recognizing that those that labor for the kingdom of God need times of rest and recollection, Jesus attempts to take them to a remote location where they can be refreshed.
- The crowds who are following Jesus, however, find out where they are going and meet them as they disembark. Rather than becoming peeved at having his plans for rest spoiled, Jesus' "heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd" (verse 34).
- In this they were like the people described in the Old Testament (Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Judith 11:19; Jeremiah 23:1-6 [our first reading]; Zechariah 10:2). In that same Old Testament, God promised he himself would supplant the evil shepherds and shepherd his sheep through the Messiah (Ezekiel 34:23; John 10:11-16).

Questions:

- In the 1st reading, what charge does the Lord have against the shepherds of Israel? What is his remedy for that situation? In what ways is the prophecy of verses 5-6 fulfilled in Jesus in salvation history? How is it fulfilled in your life?
- In the 2nd Reading, what is the dividing wall that Paul is thinking of in verse 14, and what does it symbolize? What has Christ done to it? Within your family—whether immediate or extended—how might Christ bring peace where there might have been feuds, long-term disagreements, or strained relationships? What should your own role be in bringing that peace to bear on such problems?
- Why did Jesus decide to take the disciples away (v 31)? What happened as soon as they left?
- How did the disciples and Jesus differ in the way they viewed the problem? How would you have felt about the intrusion?
- What event does this situation lead to (verses 35-44)?
- In what way were the people who ran after Jesus "like sheep without a shepherd" (verse 34)? Who would become their shepherd (John 10:14-18)? Who would Jesus designate to shepherd his sheep when he returned to heaven and until he comes again (John 21:15-17)?
- When was the last time you made a retreat? Why might Jesus invite you to make a retreat?
- How do you balance your life of prayer and life of service? Do you consider one an intrusion on the other? What should our attitude about this be?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 857-858, 2602, 753-754

Closing prayer

However softly we speak, He is near enough to hear us. Neither is there any need for wings to go to find Him. All one need do is go into solitude and look at Him within oneself. ---St. Teresa of Avila

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"Jesus had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd"

Scripture: *Mark 6:30-34*

The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Meditation: What does the image of a shepherd tell us about God's care for us? Shepherding was one of the oldest of callings in Israel, even before farming, since the Chosen People had traveled from place to place, living in tents, and driving their flocks from one pasture to another. Looking after sheep was no easy calling. It required great skill and courage. Herds were often quite large, thousands or even ten thousands of sheep. The flocks spent a good part of the year in the open country. Watching over them required a great deal of attention and care. Sheep who strayed from the flock had to be sought out and brought back by the shepherd. Since hyenas, jackals, wolves, and even bear were common and fed on sheep, the shepherds often had to do battle with these wild and dangerous beasts. A shepherd literally had to put his life on the



line in defending his sheep. Shepherds took turns watching the sheep at night to ward off any attackers. The sheep and their shepherds continually lived together. Their life was so intimately bound together that individual sheep, even when mixed with other flocks, could recognize the voice of their own shepherd and would come immediately when called by name.

The Old Testament often spoke of God as shepherd of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: *He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms* (Isaiah 40:11). Jesus told his disciples that he was the Good Shepherd who was willing to lay down his life for his sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4, John 10). When he saw the multitude of people in need of protection and care, he was moved to respond with compassionate concern. His love was a personal love for each

and every person who came to him in need. Peter the apostle called Jesus the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25). Do you know the peace and security of a life freely submitted to Jesus, the Good Shepherd? In the person of the Lord Jesus we see the unceasing vigilance and patience of God's love. In our battle against sin and evil, Jesus is ever ready to give us help, strength, and refuge. Do you trust in his grace and help at all times?

"Lord Jesus, you guard and protect us from all evil. Help me to stand firm in your word and to trust in your help in all circumstances. May I always find rest and refuge in the shelter of your presence."

Psalm 23

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies; thou anointest my head with oil, my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

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