

REFLECTIONS FOR 16th SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME YEAR B

Jeremiah 23:1-6 Ephesians 2:13-18 Mark 6:30-34

Today's readings explain how God, like a good shepherd, redeems His people and provides for them.

The readings also challenge us to use our God-given authority in the family, in the Church, and in society, with fidelity and responsibility.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah spoke against Israel's careless leaders / bad shepherds – because they had shown no concern for the poor.

The prophet concludes with a promise. God's promise. That God will draw his people to Himself, and care for them, and lead them. And they no longer need to fear.

In the 2nd reading, three times St Paul promises that Christ has given us peace. Peace. Peace.

Three times Saint Paul reminds us that, in Christ, we find our peace. In Christ. No where else. No one else. In Christ.

In Mark's Gospel, the disciples have been busy. They've been on the road. They've been out there, working hard, doing good, even when doing good wasn't easy. Jesus invites his disciples to come with Him, to come to Him, to be with Him, to rest with Him, to be focused on Him, to find peace in Him.

Come to Christ. Come and focus on the one who has already saved the world. Come to Christ who conquered death. Come to Christ, who is justice, and is peace.

We need God's grace to become good shepherds: the Christian life consists of seeking fellowship with God so that that we may serve people more effectively.

The Christian life is a continuous passage from the presence of God to the presence of people and back to God.

How can we shoulder life's burdens if we have no contact with the Lord of Life? How can we do God's work unless we rely on God's strength? And how can we receive that strength unless we pray to Him individually, in the family, and as a parish community in the Church, and receive His grace.

The Church has the double responsibility of teaching and feeding: People today find it difficult to balance those two aspects of the Christian life.

Some people apparently believe that the social ministry of the Church is all that is needed to make Christ present in the world.

Others seem to believe that the Church's major concern should be preaching the Gospel, rather than feeding the hungry and healing the sick.

Both views are one-sided. There can be no true Christianity without the proclamation of the Gospel. Teaching the Word of God is essential to a Christian community. But that is only half of the story. Christians must also display the same compassion for the suffering that

Jesus exhibited, by meeting the social and material needs of others by our works of charity as individual Christians and as a parish community.

The Church/world/families, needs good shepherds: A Good shepherd leads, nurtures, guides, protects, comforts, supports, feeds, cares, loves, heals, and saves.

There are many people searching for truth today, people hungering for instruction, good people who are looking for direction and meaning in life.

They are like sheep without a shepherd. They all need good shepherds filled with the spirit of Christ the "Good Shepherd."

- ✦ There may be parents who are sick with grief over the future of a troubled child;
- ✦ a person stripped of his/her dignity by unemployment;
- ✦ a woman facing a pregnancy alone;
- ✦ elderly people who feel the surge of life diminishing in their bodies
- ✦ people who are angry and confused because they have lost confidence in their leaders, whether political or religious.

Our world today is bleeding because some of us who are in leadership positions (church leaders, political leaders, teachers, parents, health professionals, public servants, artisans, employers and employees, caregivers) work for material reward and not for the well-being of those put under our care.

We need a total rethink on the meaning of leadership. There are not many good role models out there in our world for the youth. Parents, be a good role for your children.

The heart of all shepherding is love. Love is what made Jesus a good shepherd. And His love is his best gift to us.

May we, like Christ the Good Shepherd, lead others by our exemplary lives, our life of integrity, compassion, self-giving, and serve those put under our care- feed them, nurture them, guide them, comfort them, protect them, support them, pray for them, support them, encourage them, empower them and be a blessing to them.

It is a magnificent vocation to love and care for others and be a channel of God's blessing.

Fr Patrick