

## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 18, 2021 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, against the shepherds who shepherd my people: You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds. I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands to which I have driven them and bring them back to their meadow; there they shall increase and multiply. I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing, says the LORD.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; as king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security. This is the name they give him: "The LORD our justice."

### Psalm: Ps 23:1-3, 3-4, 5, 6

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;  
beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

He guides me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley

I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

### Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:13-18

Brothers and sisters: In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

### Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them.

When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

A Jesuit friend of mine was an actual shepherd in his youth. He had spent plenty of time out in the fields, so I asked him what taking care of sheep was like. My motive was about our readings today, all of which have references to shepherds. He surprised me. He said he hated being a shepherd and would never want to go near it again. Never. Why? Because today there are huge numbers of sheep in a herd and you could never know which was which, much less have names for them. Sheep-dogs, not the shepherd, could keep them more or less together. It was a cold job, uncomfortable and unrewarding, an industry now, with nothing personal about it. What a surprise. This seemed like the exact opposite of what we hear in the Bible. In Jesus' day, however, the herds were much smaller. A shepherd could name each sheep and they knew their master's voice by heart, the way the family dog knows your voice. Good shepherds would search and search for one lost sheep. Or if one was turned absurdly on its back, unable to roll over because of its full fleece, the shepherd would take his "crook," and using the big curve on one end, easily maneuver that sheep back to its feet. And if there was real danger, as for instance if wolves were ready to pounce, the shepherd would take out his "staff," which served as a weapon, and deal with the predators.

Bad shepherds, on the other hand, would actually scatter the sheep. God said this in the First Reading. Sheep feared and trembled and many went missing. Sometimes the uncaring shepherds would lessen their burden by driving the sheep off. People were hired who were not shepherds at all, who simply ran away when a wolf approached (Jn 10:12). God's anger flames up against them in the First Reading. Sheep and shepherds in the Bible are symbols. Jesus is the Good Shepherd in our famous Responsorial Psalm, putting himself out for us who are his sheep. Now look at the Gospel. There, Jesus was becoming very popular. Many people were coming and going, so that he and his apostles "had no opportunity even to eat." He wisely invited them to come away with him to a quiet place for rest. They went off in a boat to a "deserted place." But the needy throng traced where they figured the boat was going. They formed a "vast crowd" and ran to the spot! What should Jesus do, start ministering to them again instead of resting? The Gospel says "his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd." And, "he began to teach them many things." God's words in the First Reading had come true: "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock ... and bring them back to their meadow." The question for you and me is not whether we should go without food and drink or be workaholics for the sake of others. It is whether our own hearts are ever moved even once with pity for the scattered and fear-filled sheep-folk of our own time. Can we love them and each other, with Jesus' love? Can we be good shepherds?

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. Imagine being a caretaker of people in a way that a shepherd is for sheep. What can you do about the fear people experience all over the world due to injustice? Can you do anything to remedy any of the injustice? Is there anything you can do about unfair situations in your own living area?"
2. "In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ." If we are one in the body of Christ, is the Eucharist an important means for breaking down dividing walls among us?
3. What does Jesus do in this Gospel story that is an example of good shepherding? Doesn't he have pity and teach? Discuss compassion versus power as attributes of leadership.

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Show favor, O Lord, to your servants and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace, that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity, they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

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### **Prayer to St. Michael**

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen