

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community

16TH ORDINARY SUNDAY

Cycle B - July 18, 2021

OPENING PRAYER

Guide: *It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, Most High.*

All: **The just one shall flourish like the palm tree, like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.**

Leader: *They that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.*

All: **They shall bear fruit even in old age; vigorous and sturdy shall they be.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.



Sheeps without a shepherd

FIRST 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."

The book of Jeremiah uses in this passage a very frequent image in biblical literature: that of the shepherds and the flock. The prophet refers to the people of Israel and their religious leaders. We note the harshness of the language used against the leaders, whom he accuses of neglecting the interests of the herd by putting their personal things first. For this reason, the people is "scattered and abandoned."

However, the mission of a good prophet is not only to denounce, but to show divine mercy. And this it does when a few lines below we read some words that show a message of hope. God, who is the true shepherd, will gather his people and put diligent shepherds in front of it.

In addition, the prophet announces that God will send a Messiah, a descendant of David, who will implant the justice of God, just as God wants, and as his people need it.

- (1) What are the responsibilities that you have had to attend to in your life as a guide for other people?
- (2) Was it easy or difficult to exercise your responsibility to guide and advise?
- (3) Do you remember a "shepherd" in your life whose virtues you would like to copy?
- (4) What can we do about shepherds who neglect their flock?

SECOND 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.

This passage says one of the things that Christians ignored or stopped reading for a time: "... he made one people out of Jews and non-Jews ..." It is a message of salvation that cannot be reserved for a part of humanity. God's effort when he develops his Plan of Salvation starts with Abraham and is offered through the Jewish people for 1900 years, until the coming of Jesus Christ. But at this time, the presence of God is not limited to a chosen people, because salvation is universal.

Christ's mission has abolished distinctions, such as those of antiquity that denied non-Jews the right to approach God, and there was even a courtyard for Gentiles in the Temple, beyond which only descendants of Abraham. That "wall of separation" of the temple is abolished, since the death of Christ annuls all kinds of distinction.

Thus, an era of reconciliation is inaugurated in the world. Of humanity with God. Of men to each other. That is the true formula for authentic and lasting peace, which is but another of God's gifts that makes us overcome divisions and confrontations.

- (1) Christians for some time harassed the Jews on the accusation that "they killed Jesus Christ." After reading this text, does that attitude seem correct to you?
- (2) Do you know any person who still follows the same thought?
- (3) What can we do to solve this kind of situation?
- (4) Are there divisions within our community? Why?
- (5) What would be the correct way to resolve any type of situation that endangers peace and unity?

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.

Last week we read how Jesus Christ had sent his disciples "two by two" on an evangelizing mission. Now we read about their return, and the envoys tell how they have fared and share their experiences. Jesus invites them to retire with him, to rest, because he also recognizes the human needs of his followers. Not everything is demanding without respite, because in the midst of apostolic activity, there is also room to slow down and have time to enjoy the presence of Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ offers a perfect formula that combines intimacy with him, a time to learn, a time for mission, and a time to preach, teach.

Later we read about the agglomeration of a crowd that was looking for Jesus Christ, who tries to isolate himself from the crowd, gets on a boat with his apostles and when they reach the other shore, they were waiting for him! We notice the way Mark portrays the scene for us, for Jesus instead of astonishment or annoyance, what he shows is compassion for his people. And in this we notice a relationship with the promises of the prophet Jeremiah that we read in the first reading. And the compassion of Jesus Christ is translated into teaching, when the Divine Master takes advantage of the agglomeration of people to transmit his message. Next week we are going to see how Jesus worries in addition to the need to eat of that crowd that followed him.

- (1) Have you had any "missionary" experiences that you would like to share with the group? (Warning: It is not about showing your "wonders" but the way the Lord used you to convey his message)
- (2) Have you been able to experience the difficulties of a person who cannot read? Does it not provoke you to teach the one who does not know?
- (3) In what areas would you like to serve and help?
- (4) After answering the previous question, group members could give their colleagues ideas about organizations or places where they could provide good service.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

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