

Alleluia, alleluia!

*The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice,
says the Lord, I know them and they follow me.*

Alleluia!

Mark 6:30-34

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

“Thus in and through solitude we do not move away from people.
On the contrary, we move closer to them through compassionate ministry.

In a world that victimizes us by its compulsions, we are called to solitude where we can struggle against our anger and greed and let our new self be born in the loving encounter with Jesus Christ. It is in this solitude that we become compassionate people, deeply aware of our solidarity in brokenness with all humanity and ready to reach out to anyone in need.”

Henri Nouwen - The Way of the Heart

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME

Year B

18th July 2021

No Rest for Christ and His Apostles



We are told that Jesus would rise in the early morning and go off to a lonely place where he could be alone with his Father. This 'rest' was not a means of escape, but the opposite. It was an opportunity to draw close to his Father. To reflect on his loving work and in so doing, to value it and to enter more fully into it.

In today's Gospel passage, Jesus is doing exactly the same with his companions. Last week, we heard how He had sent them out to proclaim God's reign – casting out devils & curing the sick. Now, they too must rest, to gaze on God & so to enter more fully into HIS life and mission. But notice, it's whilst they are seeking rest, whilst they are gazing on God, that they recognize the needs of the people – they set themselves to teach and nourish them.

Opening Prayer

Show favour, 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.

Jeremiah 23:1-6

'Doom for the shepherds who allow the flock of my pasture to be destroyed and scattered – it is the Lord who speaks! This, therefore, is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says about the shepherds in charge of my people: You have let my flock be scattered and go wandering and have not taken care of them. Right, I will take care of you for your misdeeds – it is the Lord who speaks! But the remnant of my flock I myself will gather from all the countries where I have dispersed them, and will bring them back to their pastures: they shall be fruitful and increase in numbers. I will raise up shepherds to look after them and pasture them; no fear, no terror for them any more; not one shall be lost – it is the Lord who speaks! 'See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will raise a virtuous Branch for David, who will reign as true king and be wise, practising honesty and integrity in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel dwell in confidence. And this is the name he will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.'

Jeremiah was preaching in Jerusalem in the years prior to the Babylonian exile 628 - 586 BC. He proclaims God's word, condemning Israel's civil and religious leaders who have failed to lead their people. They have become like 'scattered sheep'. God Himself, will come to shepherd them.

Psalm 22(23)

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

Fresh and green are the pastures where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me, to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path; he is true to his name.

If I should walk in the valley of darkness no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff; with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever.

Ephesians 2:13-18

In Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man in himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God: in his own person he killed the hostility. Later he came to bring the good news of peace, peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near at hand. Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, written around 60AD, whilst in Rome, seeks to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals that God has for them. In today's passage we hear how through the death of Christ, we have become a new creation. 'In his own person he killed the hostility', which kept us at odds with one another and separated from God.

(Gospel overleaf)

Prayer over the Offerings

O God, who in the one perfect sacrifice brought to completion varied offerings of the law, accept, we pray, this sacrifice from your faithful servants and make it holy, as you blessed the gifts of Abel, so that what each has offered to the honour of your majesty may benefit the salvation of all.

Prayer after Communion

Graciously be present to your people, we pray, O Lord, and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries to pass from former ways to newness of life.