

# The Living Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

18 July 2021

## First Reading Jer 23:1-6

*The remnant of the flock I will gather to me, and bring them back to their pastures.*

'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.'

## Responsorial Psalm Ps 22. R. v.2

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

1. 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. (R.)
2. 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. (R.)
3. You have prepared a banquet for me in the sight of my foes. My head you have anointed with oil; my cup is overflowing. (R.)
4. 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. (R.)

## Second Reading Eph 2:13-18

*Christ, our peace, has made us one.*

In Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far 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.

## Gospel Acclamation Jn 10:27

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*My sheep listen to my voice, says the Lord; I know them, and they follow me.*

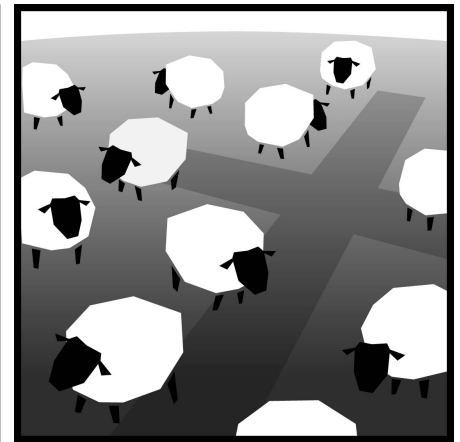
*Alleluia!*

## Gospel Mk 6:30-34

*They were as sheep without a shepherd.*

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.

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## Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

In the Temple precinct in Jerusalem there was a stone barrier separating the inner area into which only Jewish people could enter. A non-Jew would cross the barrier under pain of death. This is the 'dividing wall of enmity' to which St Paul refers, and which has been torn down by Jesus Christ in whom a new humanity is being created where discrimination or segregation is to have no place.

It is to the great shame of the Catholic Church that it collaborated in putting the Jewish people behind dividing walls of enmity in the ghettos of Europe. It is to the great credit of St John Paul II that much of this enmity was overcome, symbolised when he pressed a prayer into a cleft between stones of the Wailing Wall of the Old Temple.

Every week we come to Mass in response to Our Lord's invitation in today's gospel: 'Come away and rest a while.' Our Lord is saying 'Come away by yourselves so that I can nourish you with Heavenly Bread and Spiritual Drink which is my Holy Communion with you.'

Yes, we do that as a moment celebrating our distinctive identity, but always as a prelude to the great task. We are to go out and break down the various 'dividing walls of enmity': racism, caste and class, historical grievances, sexist subjugation.

We could take a moment to pray that we imitate St John Paul II in pressing our prayers and actions into whatever opportunities present themselves so as to break down dividing walls of enmity within our families, local communities and even around the world.

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