

## Sixteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time

## Father Ed's Homily

### Theme: "THEY WERE LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD"

The Old Testament (OT) often speaks of God as Shepherd of his people. This weekend's Responsorial Psalm is taken from Psalm 23 and tells us, the Lord (God) is his shepherd, hence there is nothing he will want. Shepherd is used in the Bible as an image of a caring and loving person. The task of a good shepherd requests special skills and courage, hence there is a distinction between good and bad shepherds. The OT also metaphorically refers to human leaders as shepherds. That explains why the prophets used this metaphor to criticize the leaders/shepherds who were ineffective and unfaithful to their God-given task as we heard in the first reading. Prophet Jeremiah in the first reading criticized the leaders of Judah for being responsible for the defeat and deportation of their people into exile. Since they failed to be good shepherds, God will punish them for their evils and raise up good shepherds who will care for His people. Jeremiah brought a message of hope and consolation to his people in exile: "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."

There are times, we felt/feel like the people of ancient Judah whose leaders were not faithful to their God-given tasks. I still remember vividly the sex scandal explosion in 2022. Remember, many people have not yet recovered from the shock and trauma of the terrorist attack of the World Trade Center on 9/11, 2001. The sex scandal, clericalism, and financial embezzlement by some of the priests/bishops, the shepherds of our beloved Roman Catholic Church, have left 'a grave wound' on the Church that only Jesus Christ, the true and Good Shepherd, will be able to bring healing and recovery to these victims and their families of the abuse.

St. Mark and his early Christian community saw the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy in the person of Jesus. For them and the future Christians, they saw Jesus Christ as the "righteous shoot God raised of David." If you would recall last weekend's Gospel reading, Jesus called the Twelve apostles and sent them out on their first missionary journey with specific instructions, namely to heal the sick, expel demons, and to preach the Word of God for repentance. On this 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Mark gives us their report when they came back from their missionary journey. Jesus, the good Shepherd, is not only concerned about the results/reports of their mission but also their welfare. Jesus asked them to take a rest from the mission: "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." My dear people of God, taking day off and vacation should be part of your self-care. It's very important for your wellbeing! Remember, God took a rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after completing Creation. St Mark tells us the big crowd did not allow them to take their rest so they have to take a boat to a deserted place. According to Mark, when Jesus and his apostles disembarked from the boat and Jesus saw the huge crowds again, "His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." Beloved, please realize that Jesus did not reprimand the crowd for disrupting their rest, rather his heart was moved with pity. Jesus, being the Good Shepherd, satisfied their spiritual and physical hunger, hence they were running after him.

Fellow parishioners, there are many people in our world today who are like sheep without shepherds. Just think of the elderly people, homebound who have no one to take care of them, the homeless, poor, and needy, and those that society overlooks due to political, gender, or religious differences are all like sheep that need good shepherds. As Christians, we are all supposed to take care of one another, especially those who can't take care of themselves. Someone put it so well: "A Christian who does not care is like a lamp that does not give light." When we care and love one another, we are truly living the Gospel.

As St. Paul reminds us in the second reading, through Christ we are all brothers and sisters. Through his death, Christ has destroyed the wall between Jews and Gentiles and has united the children of his heavenly Father. If we all see Christ in one another, we'll be living heaven here on earth.

During this week, kindly ask yourself, what kind of Shepherd are you? Do you care and love those God has put you in charge: your children, your staff, students, to mention a few? Our world today also is need of good Shepherds/leaders who will truly care and love their flocks.

Let us all pray that we will always imitate, Jesus, the Good Shepherd. May Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband St. Joseph pray for us to be faithful followers of their Son, Jesus Christ.