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16th Ordinary Sunday - 18 July 2021

Gerard Moore

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18 July 2021

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

We have this week quite an interesting concatenation of ideas. In our reading from the prophet Jeremiah, we hear him condemn religious and civil leaders and awaiting a leader who will bring justice. Jesus, in contrast, is a leader who sees the people as sheep without a shepherd, and seeks to lead in justice and truth. Like Jeremiah, he reads the longing of the people and responds with pity. Somewhat in parallel, Paul teaches us that Jesus is our peace.

Collect of the Sunday

This is the second collect introduced into the Ordinary Time masses from the liturgy of ancient Milan. Its original liturgical setting was as an oration during the days of fasting, vigil and petition in preparation for the feast of Pentecost in Milan. The prayer was well crafted for such an occasion, with its references to the fervour of the community's faith, hope and love, its vigilance and perseverance, and the observance of the divine commands such as fasting, prayer and petition. This immediacy and specificity are now obscured with the prayer nestled into Ordinary time, leaving the 'commands' as open to broader interpretation and somewhat less touching on our actual lives. Nevertheless, the strength and persistence which enable vigilant observance of divine mandates are products of the faithful's passion for the virtues of faith, hope and love. Both this fervour and perseverance are gifts of God's forgiveness and clemency.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are our Shepherd. Lord, have mercy.
You invite us into a life of prayer. Christ, have mercy.
You are the peace of the Father. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Jeremiah 23:1-6

The prophet Jeremiah condemns the religious and civil leaders for their disregard for the people, and alludes to a coming leader who will embody justice

Second Reading

Ephesians 2:13-18

Paul teaches that our peace is in Christ, a peace in which we have access in the one Spirit to the Father.

Gospel Reading

Mark 6:30-34

Jesus is moved with pity by the longing of the people and sets himself to shepherd the deserted sheep.

Reflection

The Lectionary is about to do a strange turn, odd to scripture scholars and not really too helpful to preachers. Our Gospel today is the prelude to Mark's feeding of the five thousand. We have the first half which sets the scene and shows Jesus teaching the crowd. There is much rich material here, but for the evangelist it is completed with the narrative of the first multiplication of the loaves and fish. Yet we will not hear that reading next week when the Lectionary takes us to John 6 which is read over the following Sundays. While it is a quirk we are stuck with, and does not quite affect our readings this week, it means that we are left with an incomplete passage. Jesus, the shepherd teaches but also feeds. That theme is picked up in the Johannine readings, but it leaves the Markan passage a little incomplete.

However, the Gospel is rich. It identifies a number of issues for these missionary disciples and discipleship in general. While it appears quite the natural thing for the returning pairs of the Twelve to express their joy in what they had achieved, Mark is disagreeing. The pronouns and verbs are the give-away: 'they report all *they* had done and taught'. In fact, they had been more successful than Jesus in that area, however their reporting attributes it to themselves, to their preaching and teaching and healing. The prior passage had been at pains to point out that the disciples were only acting in the name of God when they were in concert with Jesus. Yet here it is their work, not his work through them. Mark is sounding a warning to the readers that the Twelve do not quite understand. They will continue to misunderstand across the Gospel, and in particular, immediately misunderstand the forthcoming miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fish.

The people do understand. They seek healing and to be in the presence of Jesus and his group. The decision to retire to a deserted place is to allow for rest, and

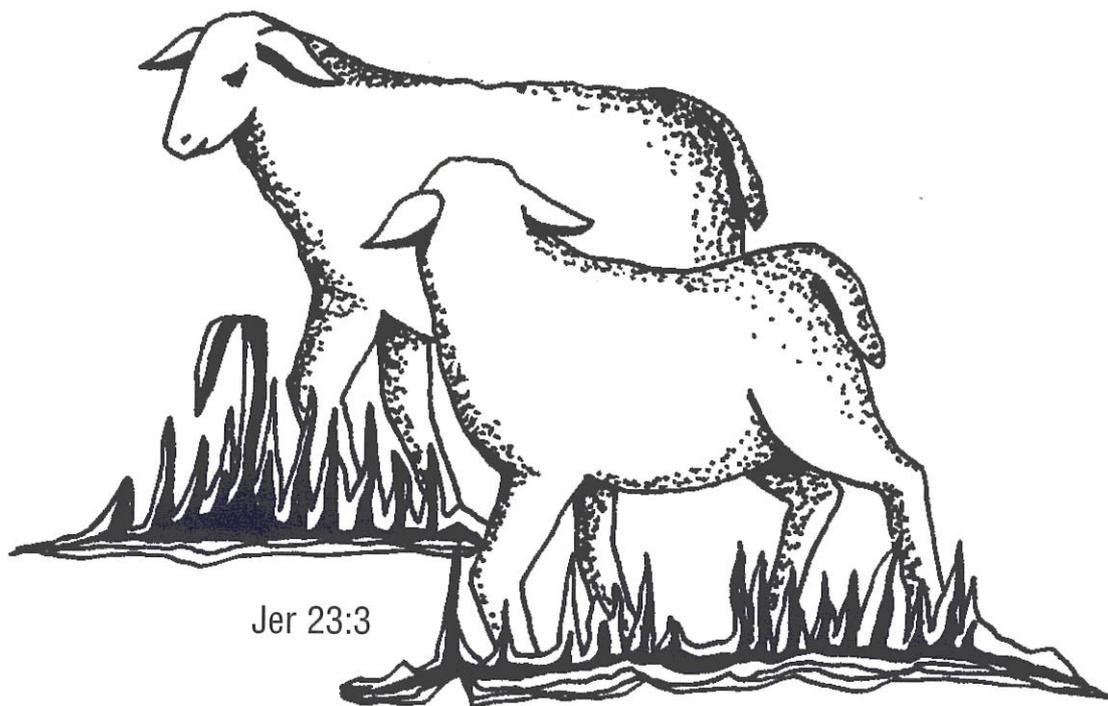
perhaps the chance to recalibrate the self-perception of the Twelve. Yet the opportunity is denied Jesus. The locals know where they are headed to, perhaps the boat is even being directed by a local guide, and they flock to him from all the villages. Word spreads faster than sail, and a multitude have arrived even before Jesus has touched the shore.

Later passages show the indifference of the Twelve to the people, but the attitude of Jesus defines his role as a prophet. He is moved with pity. He saw them through the eyes of a shepherd, and they appeared to him as lost sheep. And so, he ministered to them, teaching them, and soon feeding them. This is a decisive moment in Jesus' ministry and a defining moment for all Christian ministers. It is one taken up in that line by Pope Francis that pastors must have the smell of the sheep. While Francis addressed this to priests, the discipleship context in Mark allows us to broaden it to all ministries. Jesus is moved with pity for the crowds. He sees, hears and feels their needs. He recognises where and how they feel abandoned. His pity and concern is integrated with his commitment as shepherd. The shepherd is committed utterly to the sheep, not to himself. He settles the crowd and teaches them. Soon he will feed them. It is worth noting that the setting is described as in the 'desert'. In this, Mark is offering us a reference back to Moses, to the desert as a place of learning, and as a place of being fed by the Lord (the mana).

What should be made of this reading in the parish? The Catholic community is also a centre for discipleship within the local area, and has a missionary apostolate to the families, organizations and groups in the town and suburb. Jesus and his somewhat errant Twelve are not serving themselves but bringing about the kingdom of God. There is a challenge here for us about how we are amongst the wider community and interact with them so that we have the smell of the sheep. What are the concerns, the sicknesses, the demons, the injustices in our community, and will people think we are there for them in these? Will they feel that we have hearts of pity and mercy? As we have seen from previous Sundays, Jesus knows suffering, rejection and disappointment. The people feel his empathy. Do our communities feel our empathy?

The reading from the prophet Jeremiah is a gloss on the shepherd theme. Jeremiah excoriates the leaders of the people. They are expected to be shepherds of the people, but the people are scattered and lost. The politics of the exile lie behind the text but there is a message that resounds beyond the historical limits. The authentic shepherds are known for their attention to justice: *this is the name they give him, the Lord our justice*. Two elements point to the Markan narrative. Jesus is bringing the gifts of the prophet: healing, the overturning of ritual discrimination and teaching. As opposed to the officials, the false shepherds of Jeremiah, the people are not scattered but come in overwhelming crowds. In choosing the excerpt from Jeremiah, the Lectionary provides a further foil for Jesus, a true shepherd with a heart for the sheep and a will to bring back those who stray.

The Pauline reading is a continuation of the Letter to the Ephesians. Its links to the Gospel and the Jeremiah reading are tenuous. Both those readings portray Jesus as the prophet. For Paul that terminology is alien to his audience, but he writes in confirmation of the nature of that prophecy. In an earlier reading from Mark's Gospel Jesus raises Jarius' daughter from death. Paul explains that this power is based in the Cross, which in fact is the point of the Gospel of Mark we just have not read that far yet! In his death and resurrection, Jesus is our peace, and is able to overcome the legalism of the law, reconcile humanity with God and enable access in one Spirit to the Father. The Ephesians text echoes the Gospel in how Jesus preached to those who are near and far, preaching peace.



**I will gather the
remnant of my flock.**

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Knowing that the Shepherd listens to the voice of the flock, we entrust our prayer to the Lord, who guides us to the restful waters of life and feeds us on the Word of God.

Petitions

We pray for the bishops and priests who are pastors in the Church, that they may grow in the knowledge and love of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, and be open to the Spirit in the coming Plenary Council.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of international organisations, that they may govern with honesty and integrity and restore peace in places where there is division and political unrest, particularly in Myanmar.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who work in hospitals, aged care homes and medical centres, that they may be inspired to serve Christ in the sick people who are placed in their care.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all families who suffer from broken marriages and divorce, that they may be comforted by the staff of God's mercy and attain reconciliation and peace within themselves.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our parishioners here present and those who are away, may we share in the ministry of God's active love by kindly reaching out to others in the week ahead.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those suffering through illness and grief that they will be supported with compassion and love by those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Gracious God, you sent Christ to be present among us as a constant guide and shepherd of your flock, comfort us through the Spirit and grant our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA

All the earth, proclaim the Lord. L. Deiss. 534
All people that on earth do dwell. 533
Gift of finest wheat. O. Westendorf/ R. Kreutz. 191
God of peace. A. Kelly/ C. Willcock SJ. 553.
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 402
I heard the voice of Jesus say. H. Bonar/ R. V. Williams. 468
Like a shepherd. R. Dufford SJ. 467
Shepherd me, O God. M. Haugen. 24
O Christ the great foundation. T. Lew/ S. Wesley. 484
The Lord is my shepherd. B. Boniwell. 506
The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want (Crimond). J. Irvine. 473

AOV1

All the earth, proclaim the Lord. L. Deiss. 184
All people that on earth do dwell. 25
Be reconciled as one. C. Willcock SJ. 162
Because the Lord is my shepherd. C. Walker. 66
Come to me. G. Norbet OSB. 37
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 126
I heard the voice of Jesus say. H. Bonar/ R. V. Williams. 54
Like a shepherd. R. Dufford SJ. 160
Shepherd me, O God M. Haugen. 33
The Lord is my shepherd. B. Boniwell. 26
The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want (Crimond). J. Irvine. 144

AOV2

God of peace. A. Kelly/ C. Willcock SJ. 138
Praise to the Lord, the almighty. C. Winkworth et. al./ Straslund Gesanbuch. 132

AOV4Kids

A child's prayer. D. Halloran. 111
For the journey. G. Holmes. 128
The table of God. F. O'Brien. 8

AOVNG

The Lord is my shepherd. Joshua Blakesley. 127

CWB

Come to me, all who labour. Gregory Norbet OSB. 660
The living God my shepherd is. J. Driscoll SJ. 827
The Lord my shepherd rules my life. Christopher Idle. 829
The Lord is my shepherd. Brian Boniwell. 830
The Lord is my shepherd, my shield. Joseph Wise. 831
The Lord's my shepherd. *Scottish Psalter*. 833

CWBII

Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions

Good Shepherd. you know us. Christopher M. Idle. 357

Like a shepherd. Robert J. Dufford SJ. 538

God of peace. Anthony Kelly Csr. 546

Additional selections by Chris deSilva

The Lord is my shepherd. Brian Boniwell. 619

The Lord's my shepherd. *Scottish Psalter*. 620

S&S1

Shepherd me, O God. Marty Haugen. 59

S&S2

The Lord is my shepherd. Joshua Blakesley. 250

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 22: *The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.*

Psalm 22: Kathleen Boschetti MSC. CWB 34a

Psalm 22: Stephen Somerville. CWB 51

Psalm 22(23): Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 590

Psalm 23: My shepherd is the Lord: Joseph Gelineau SJ. GA 25 (Antiphon II)

Psalm 23 (22): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 24

The Lord is my shepherd: Paul Mason. PM pg. 18

The Lord is my shepherd: Marty Haugen. LPB pg. 127

Music selections by Michael Mangan

You are my shepherd (FWS based on Ps 23) [Gifts, Communion]

One body in Christ (TWB – esp V1) [Communion]

