

## 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

In our first reading for this Sunday, Jeremiah the prophet condemns the leaders of Israel for neglecting their duties toward the people entrusted to their care. Instead of gathering the flock and caring for them, they scattered and drove them away. The prophet proclaims that the Lord sees their misdeeds and will punish them. Then the Lord himself will gather the remnant of the flock and bring them back to their meadow where they shall increase and multiply. He will then appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so they “no longer fear and tremble”.

This ties in neatly with the gospel. The promise of Jeremiah was being fulfilled in Jesus. We see Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in action. Firstly, we see his care for the Twelve, who have just returned from their missionary work and need a break. Secondly, we see his care for the ordinary people, who “were like sheep without a shepherd”, and whom he taught at length. What a contrast there is between Jesus and the official leaders of his time, who were not different from the leaders of Israel in the time of Jeremiah. In Jesus we see the divine compassion in action.

It all comes down to the fact that the Lord is our shepherd, guiding and protecting us, and providing for all our needs (Ps 23). We are the flock led by the good shepherd- a shepherd who is moved with pity at the sight of the sheep. From the time of creation, the Lord has watched over us and guided us. When no one could shepherd us back to himself, he sent his Son to reconcile us to himself and free us from the bonds of sin. He sees who and where we are and knows what we need, providing for all our needs.

The Lord continues his salvific work in the world with our help as we are his “hands and feet on earth’ (I Peter 4:10). As we traverse the dark valley, shepherd and sheep, united in love, let us always be moved with compassion, identifying with the most vulnerable, tending to their needs. We should take time off from time to time to rest, pray and recuperate so as to avoid burnout.