



Prayer

Loving Father, You have given us the virtue of faith to follow Your Son. May we place our faith in Him alone and find, at the end of our journey on earth, a place with You in heaven. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Last Sunday's readings presented the theme of being summoned by God and sent as prophetic people to share His Word. Being summoned and sent assumes that we have faith in God. But, what happens when we take our eyes off of God and lose faith after we have been sent?

This is the concern posed in our First Reading from Jeremiah. God had sent faithful leaders of the House of Israel to care for God's people, just as shepherds care for their sheep.

Soon, these "shepherds" took their eyes off of God. Their lack of faith in God soon turned into a lack of fidelity toward God's people.

God warns the leaders that he will replace their shepherding with "a righteous shoot" from King David's reign and he will be the Good Shepherd who never abandons his flock. In addition to the Good Shepherd, other shepherds will be appointed to care for God's people.

Question

United with the Good Shepherd, in what way are you called to shepherd God's people?

Commentary

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:13-18

**Virtue of Faith:
Part 4**

Mother Teresa, noted for her tremendous care for the world's poor, was once asked, "With so many poor in the world who need your help, where do you begin?" Her reply was simple: "With the one who is next to me."

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, preached "peace to [those] who were far off and to [those] who were near." He did not discriminate. Whoever would have ears to listen, would be granted the peace of Christ.

We do not have to look beyond our own home to shepherd God's faithful (or unfaithful). People who are "far off" are those who have lost faith in God. These people might be our own family members or friends.

While it is easy to shepherd people who are faithful to the Lord and follow the good shepherd, we are summoned and sent to lead the stray sheep back to the peace of Christ.

Question

Do you know of someone in your home or neighborhood who needs the peace of Christ?

Are you interested in receiving free commentaries for your own personal or group reflections throughout the year?

**Visit us at Christ in Our Neighborhood
www.christ-ion.com**

Commentary

Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

In last week's Gospel, Jesus summoned and sent his apostles with authority to cast out demons, cure the sick, and preach repentance. This week's Gospel tells of the apostle's return to the Lord with their success stories. They "reported all that they had done and taught."

While the Gospel clearly shows the beginnings of an organized society of disciples with the Apostles as leaders of the Church, it also acknowledges that only with Christ are the leaders able to carry out their leadership abilities.

Notice that the Apostles reported all that "they" had done and taught. There is a great temptation to brag about our own accomplishments; even if they are related to God's service.

Without chastising the twelve, Jesus invites them to simply go on retreat and rest a while. We need to retreat from our ministry as priests, religious, parents, and teachers to remember that all that we do can only be accomplished in Him who is the Good Shepherd. Our ministries must be directly related to Jesus. Otherwise, the people we serve will be "like sheep without a shepherd."

Question

When you begin your service to God in the Church each day, do you invite Jesus to guide you?

This Week's Task

Take time to go over these last few weeks. Focus your attention on the Virtue of Faith and how you can share it.

If you missed a weekly task or need to reflect on questions from previous weeks, visit christ-ion.com to download the entire series.

Prayer

A prayer for all who are summoned and sent:

Lord God,

I sometimes wonder why and how you have called me to serve you and your people. But here I am. As you have called me to lead others in faith, lead me when I am tired and hungry to places of rest and nourishment.

The prayer continues with Psalm 23

Psalm

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

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

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

He guides me in right paths

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

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

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

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

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

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

Conclude with an Our Father

"Come
away by
yourselves
to a
deserted place
and
rest a while."