

16th Sunday of the Year B

First Reading Jeremiah 23:1-6

"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."

Second Reading Ephesians 2:13-18

In Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart 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 Mark 6:30-34

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.

Meditation

"Come by yourselves to an out-of-the-way place and rest a little." Having returned from their mission throughout the Galilee and reported to Jesus on the great missionary adventure they have initiated, the Twelve at last have vacation time. They are hardly back when the crowds come running. There is not a moment of peace! So they flee across the lake to withdraw with Jesus into a desert place. But it is futile, for the people are faster and are already there when they arrive. So Jesus, seized with pity for these sheep without a shepherd, begins to instruct them at length. Their "vacation" was spoiled. On their return from their missionary travels, the disciples were no doubt looking forward to the rest they would find with their Master. He alone could give meaning to their lives, a depth to their words, a new dimension to their most routine actions. But in refusing to send away the crowds even during this necessary respite, Jesus reveals to his followers what they seek from him. He offers no escape from the world. He offers only apprenticeship in God's tenderness for his people. His love urges the apostles. Like their master, they agree to be at the mercy of all. Does this mean there is no vacation for Christians? Not at all! We need rest, but there is no vacation from loving.