

“He is Our Peace”

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The scripture reading for 16th Sunday of the Ordinary Time uses the images of sheep and shepherds. The first reading from Prophet Jeremiah points out to the abusive relationship of the sheep and the shepherds. In the scriptures, sheep are symbolize innocence and total dependence on their shepherd. In the Gospel reading stating on how Jesus was teaching the crowd gathered around him, “His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.” Both readings tell us on how the people of God were abused and/or neglected by their own leaders. Many times religious and political institutions end up self-serving and self-preserving instead of using institutional structures to serve people.

Leaders are responsible to protect and care the people God put under their protection. However, Jeremiah and Jesus lamented on the condition the people of God were treated in their time pointing to God’s love and promise to his people. Psalm 23 sums up God’s true protection of his flock, “The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.” People gathered around Jesus and followed him wherever he went to the point he could not even have a break because they sensed and witnessed the caring character of a true shepherd.

In the second reading, St. Paul to the Ephesians writes, “In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.” Jesus in his image sheep and shepherd, he said that he would gather his scattered sheep to be one flock under one shepherd. Jesus even said even a single lost or wandering sheep will not be neglected or counted off. Therefore, Christ is not only our shepherd, according to St. Paul, “He is our peace” because he broke down and abolished the abusive institutional structures hedged by “legal claims” for self-preservation. The first reading concludes, “The Lord our justice,” reminding us our dependence on God as our true shepherd we “shall dwell in security” even when we face trial and tribulations. Jesus’ peace is not about “not to rock the boat” of status quo; rather is about “breaking down the dividing wall of enmity.”

The resistance to level the playing field is a façade of self-righteousness of keeping the status quo by looking backward retrieving archaic values contrary to Gospel teaching. The Gospel reading concludes, “He began to teach them many things.” Are we attentive to the many teaching of Jesus Christ summed up in “Love one another as I have loved you” and “I give you peace, my peach I give you the world cannot give.” Truly, he is our peace.