

Homily. 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. B. 20/21 July 2024.

If last weekend's message was about Jesus authorising us to speak and act his name and Spirit which it was, this weekend is telling us to let him look after us on our apostolic mission. Recall the disciples, turned into apostles by Jesus, were sent out in pairs to speak the Lord's message, to bring him and be him to those they encountered. They had some success in doing this, to the point where people were now seeking them and their help just as they'd sought out the ministry and help of Jesus himself.

The gospel says that the tired apostles, upon returning to Jesus after their first mission having authored him into life for others, were trailed by the needy crowd hungry for healing and for hope. Seeing this situation for exactly what it was, Jesus took charge. He directed his group to cross the Sea of Galilee in hopes of finding a quiet place so that they could tell their stories, rest and recreate. What Jesus didn't foresee was the depth of desperation in the people. They tracked down where the Lord and his company were headed, then going on foot around the Sea, were ready to meet them on the other side.

Once more taking charge, Jesus set himself between the apostles and the crowd teaching them at length. St. Mark says that Jesus could see how much like sheep without a shepherd they were with no one to guide or care for them. He became in this instance the model Good Shepherd, not sparing himself so as to help the people. In the process he also shielded his own apostles for a time from their want and needs.

You and I are authorised by the God Shepherd through our faith, our Church community and our Sacraments to bring his care and help to others. We do this many times each day, in our homes, our places of learning, work and play, in our friendships and here within our Church. But, and this matters, we remain under the charge and care of Christ. He is the True Shepherd who leads, guides and empowers us and also protects us from harm. He wants us not just to serve others, but asks us to allow him serve and tend to us. We forget this bit at our own peril.

Recreation is a word to worth keeping in mind when ministering in the Lord's name and Spirit. It's the green pastures and fresh flowing water that revives our drooping spirits, that re-create us when we're tired, stressed, depleted of drive. It's to these places of refreshment that the Lord leads us, pointing as they do towards the banquet of life when all things and people are made whole and new again.

In our daily ministry and caring service wherever it happens, Jesus is there first. When we tire, and we all do so, he stands ready to shepherd for us giving us some rest, for he is the only one who can save and help all of us to pass from former ways into the newness of God's life.

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