**Ordinary Time 16 B Lectionary Catechesis**

**Fr. Alan Hartway, CPPS**

**Guardian Angels Parish in Mead, CO**

|  |
| --- |
| Shepherding as pastoral care provide the overall theme to this week’s reading, yet behind that in the larger picture is the work and ministry of prayer, healing, and reconciliation. In our shattered world, we experience on a daily basis the gut wrenching brokenness of peoples’ lives. Clarifying and focusing our evangelization with them is very important for the success of the work. In other words are people just meeting us and however good our hospitality is, but more importantly are people encountering Christ. |

**FIRST READING: Jeremiah 23, 1-6**

**“**Shepherd” counts among the ancient Mesopotamian royal titles and so fits well with the agenda of the prophetic consciousness and its challenge to the royal consciousness. Because the political and economic elite have abused the poor, God will punish them. The second half the passage tells of God’s care for the poor. This reading, Psalm 23, and the gospel work well together. Christ is of course that Good Shepherd whom God will appoint. Jeremiah works during the last years of the kings of Judah, who are obstinately clueless about their impending doom. In the very next passage, Jeremiah takes on the false prophets and the corrupt priests of the court in Jerusalem. Contemporary examples or parallels are not difficult to find. The background text for me has always been the short book by Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What are the qualifications, in light of this reading, for good political, economic, and spiritual leadership?  Choose one of the popes from the last 125 years and share the ways they were good shepherds. Refer to CCC for info on papal qualities. |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Which leaders on the national or world stage do you believe are good shepherds? Name them and list qualities.  What would you like to see in your local and national leaders? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How do you work with God in your life to care for the poor?  What can you do to stop buying into the fear and trembling rampant in our culture and society? |
| **WORSHIP** | What part of the liturgy affords you the most comfort?  How do the homilies in your parish reflect a prophetic consciousness? |

**First Reading**

**RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 23, 1-3. 3-4. 5. 6**

The Good Shepherd Psalm, much beloved and used frequently on any occasion, reminds us of the tender compassion of our God and God’s providential care for us. The CCC’s only citation of the Psalm is “You anoint my head with oil.” Vs. 5b. Again the confirmation nature of this Sunday’s readings is emphasized. Last Sunday just spoke of this sealing of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians.

**Vs. 5: CCC 1293** An anointing, such as confirmation, is a spiritual seal. By seal, the Church means seals from the classical world of antiquity; it is not the same as sealing an envelope at all. Seals create identity, ownership, and authority; furthermore seals have built into them a claim of veracity and authenticity. Σφραγις (=”seals”) were usually worn as rings or as pendants around the neck and frequently of precious stones. This is the only time the CCC uses Greek in Greek. More on “cylinder seals” at this phrase on Wikipedia; it is more likely that a Mesopotamian seal is meant here instead of a Roman one.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | Not many of use in our urban world have experiences of sheep or shepherds. Yet, the image “feels” good to us. Why is this so?  What does the anointing of the head mean to you? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | Vs. 5 in the psalm is about abundance. What kind of abundance to you have or would like to have?  What did the anointing at your confirmation mean to you? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | We all have a fear of evil; watch any horror movie. What are the evils you fear in your life?  How can we be true and authentic disciples of Jesus more intentionally? |
| **WORSHIP** | What does “dwelling in the House of the Lord” mean for you?  How does worship refresh our souls? |

**Responsorial Psalm**

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 2, 13-18**

Paul suggestively names here the walls of the courtyards in the Jerusalem Temple that separated the priests, from the men, from the women, and from the foreigner as the “dividing wall of enmity.” The word in the text for “enmity” is extremely strong and negative. Remember that at the crucifixion the veil of the temple was torn in two, thus exposing access to God’s “shekinah” presence to the eye of anyone. In other words, the old forms of worship of hierarchic exclusion are ended, and in Christ a new covenant is created through His blood. In Christ is given the new human template, no longer us and them, but now I and thou. Crucified outside the walls on a public highway leading both into and away from the city, Jesus confronts one and all; one has to look, there’s no turning away from the cross. That we all engage in this same action brings us together in a new way. We see the results of hostility/enmity in a riveting way. It’s unavoidable. Peace is mentioned three times in the reading. First, Christ is our peace; it is His cross that stops us in our tracks, and his blood confronts us with the true facts of life. We can no longer run around in our self-important busy-ness. The second instance, “establishing peace” comes right with “reconcile”; the verb is “reconcile” while “establishing” its participle, so that authentic peace is seen to result from the reconciliation Christ effects, because this new thing that God makes of us at the cross. He reconciles the “ins” and the “outs”; then and only then can His peace be established. There are no walls (crucifixion is outside the walls) to obstruct access, just as Vatican II had to remind us that the altar is free-standing and accessible from all side to everyone, for the altar is Christ. Thirdly peace is actually stated twice in vs. 17, “peace to the those who were far off and peace to those who were near”. The repetition ensures that the effects of this peace are available to one and all indiscriminately. “He preached” is more accurately to say that “he evangelized”. The message of evangelization is precisely directed to the evangelization promoting and striving toward the effects of this reconciliation which is a peace, from God, “beyond all human understanding.”

**Vs. 14: CCC 2305** Earthly peace is only an image of the fullness of the peace of Christ, “in his own person he has killed the hostility.” Christ is Prince of Peace who blesses the peacemakers, and gives us the peace beyond all understanding.

**Vs. 16: CCC 2305** See immediately above.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does it mean to you to say, “Christ is our peace”?  What is at the core of the new evangelization, after reading this passage? |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | The first step is the encounter with Christ as our peace and understanding that He alone reconciles us and establishes peace. Have you taken this first step?  What do find to be the obstacles in your life getting in the way of this reconciliation and peace? |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | In a culture of prejudices and bigotries, blatant and subtle, how can the Church work to overcome the “walls of enmity”?  Who are the “ins” and “outs” in our culture? |
| **WORSHIP** | When we confess our sins and ask for mercy at the beginning of the Mass, so you ever think to mention prejudices?  Share, while regarding and respecting all confidentialities of the seal of confession, your experience of this sacrament in your life. |

**Second Reading**

**GOSPEL: Mark 6, 30-34 The Apostles Return and Report on the Mission**

From this account, we are affirmed in the apostolic nature of the Church. First that it apostolic which means mission. Second apostolic in that the Church is sent by Jesus Christ and returns to Jesus Christ; in other words the mission is completely focused on Jesus Christ, in the way that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” Finally that the Church is always within that apostolic tradition from the beginning until now; the charism works both in mission and in the authority of the mission. Jesus affectionately invites the apostles to take care of themselves in the interior renewal of prayer. Mission without the foundation of prayer will burn itself out. Four times our short narrative mentions the vast crowds, their hastening to Jesus, and their many needs. The response of Jesus is affective, not merely in some contemporary emotional sense, but rather the affect of “caritas” that comes from the depth of his divine experience as a person. The Greek verb for “he had pity on them” is quite literally, “his very guts were wrenched” at the sight of their many needs and spiritual poverty. Jesus’ reaction is visceral and seizes the depths of his divine humanity. In our modern anesthetized, jaded, and numbed world, it takes quite a lot for this to happen to many of us anymore. Jesus’ response is prayer and teaching. The teaching must surely be about the pastoral work of healing, and one cannot help but think reconciliation. What immediately follows is the feeding of the five thousand. Here our lectionary cuts away for the nest five weeks to John 6, the great Eucharistic Discourse.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KNOW YOUR**  **FAITH** | What does “apostolic” means as a mark of the Church?  Name the four marks of the Church. (Hint: see the Creed) |
| **LIVE YOUR**  **FAITH** | What is your pastoral ministry, how is it a healing or reconciling ministry, and to whom are you accountable?  Discuss and share the way prayer supports and sustains your ministry. |
| **SHARE YOUR FAITH** | How does church hospitality function to open the door for people to Christ?  Name the “gut wrenching” things that people bring to the Church. How can we overcome our “deadness” to the world’s ills? |
| **WORSHIP** | How does your liturgy help “gather us in”?  Pastor is a word for shepherd. Share your reflections and support for the work of your pastor in his care for the flock entrusted to him. |

**Gospel**

**Next Sunday: OT 17 B: II Kings 4, 42-44; Psalm 145; Ephesians 4, 1-6; John 6, 1-5**

**Please Note: Next Sunday, OT 17 B through OT 21 B (for 5 Sundays) is all of John 6, 1-69, *The Great Eucharistic Discourse*. Because Mark’s gospel is the shortest, John 6 interrupts here and fills in. There will be additional material for reflection on the Eucharist and a chart of the five Sundays reading for the sake of an overview that may shape reflection and homiletics.**