

Jesus: The Exemplary Shepherd!

The Prophet Jeremiah was misunderstood and persecuted by his people and was seen as a prophet of gloom and doom. His prophecy was written towards the end of the rule of king Zedekiah, just before the Babylonian captivity in 587 B.C. The first reading today (Jeremiah 23) is part of the warnings of Prophet Jeremiah. These warnings of today were directed to Judah's shepherds (rulers & kings) who failed in their responsibility of protecting and guiding the people entrusted to them. Prophet Jeremiah in the reading today ended with a promise of the Messiah, "*I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; as king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell in security.*" A prophecy, Christians believed was fully fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the exemplary Shepherd.

In line with the reflection on what a good shepherd does is the choice of our responsorial Psalm today, the popular Psalm 23, which describes God as the Shepherd who takes care of both spiritual and physical needs of his flock. Similarly, St. Paul in the second reading today describes the mission of Jesus, the exemplary shepherd who shed his blood for us. St. Paul reminds us, "*... In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace.... He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*"

The Gospel of Mark we read today reminds us the enduring and endearing qualities of Jesus, the exemplary Shepherd, who ceaselessly cared for his flock. His heartfelt compassion was followed by action as the Gospel stated it this way, "*When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.*" Jesus, the exemplary Shepherd invites all of us to be true shepherds to people entrusted to us at different levels. It is an invitation to a life of service. A life, which reminds that through the gifts we have received, we become gifts to other people, and the privileges we have received make us privileges to other people. Our ability to respond to this invitation depends on our self-giving and selflessness. We pray that the good Lord will give us the wisdom and courage to respond to this invitation. Amen