

071909 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Hello Scouts... hello Scout leaders. Once again, my name is Deacon Tom and it is a joy and honor to be with you. We come together just as Jesus and His Disciples came together. And as Jesus did by example and by invitation, we do what He did – we come to give praise to God the Father and to thank God for His many gifts to us. Jesus would go to the synagogue and read Scripture – and so we too have just read Scripture here.

I'd like to pick a few selected thoughts from today's readings and make a short homily about them. First – some thoughts from the Gospel. We heard these words: "The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. Okay – let's stop so you get the picture of what's happening. In an earlier portion of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus sent his twelve off as his helpers – his missionaries. He empowered them – he gave them the necessary internal power to preach... to expel demons and to cure the sick. So they did these things and they come back – probably pretty excited: "Jesus... Jesus.... you'll never believe it – but I was able to do what you did. I began to preach about you and the Father and the words came out of me and people marveled at what I said. I didn't know I could do this." And another of the twelve: "Jesus – there was this person and they said he was possessed by a demon... they brought him to me and I laid hands on him and he convulsed and became natural... normal just like we are..."

And the gentle Jesus – probably smiling inside because He knew full well what they had done and where they got their powers... Jesus then said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."

Jesus had given His followers permission to go off and work among those who were sick... those with diseases... ministering to others -- this work is draining and it tired them and Jesus recognized this. In his gentle manner – he invited them to go off for awhile and rest. There is an expression called ‘recharging your batteries.’ There is another expression which can have two meanings – the words are ‘resting in the Spirit.’ In a way – you and I are here today – sort of taking time to Rest in the Spirit – to do this on the Sabbath. This is what God wants us to do... we honor His Commandment to ‘keep holy the Sabbath Day’ when we do this.

Now – here are the beginnings of some lessons that Jesus and Holy Scriptures are giving to us. You and me – we’re called to minister to others. And here’s an easy example: do you ever take time to recognize what your parents have gone through? Have you ever... ever said, “Mom – you look tired? Let me clear the table and load the dishwasher.” (Be careful – she may faint if you do this!). Recognizing the needs of others is what Jesus did – it’s a good Christian thing to do. It is a good Scout practice to do as well.

In the Epistle from St. Paul today, there were these words, “Brothers and sisters: In Christ Jesus – you who once were far off have become near...” These words imply that those who are followers of Christ can gain closeness to Him. We gain this closeness through prayer... through thankfulness... through living a life of witness to others.

Okay Deacon – I’m 11 years old - how can I give witness to others? One good idea is to be on the lookout for others who are or seem to be far from God. We can invite them to Church with us on a day when there will be some special brunch or picnic sponsored by the Church.

(It probably won't work if you say to someone who feels alone or distant from God, "Hey – do you want to come worship Jesus with me?" Nope – that's not gonna work.

Another simple thing to consider is that we're called to give witness in the simplest of ways. Don't be ashamed or worrisome what others will think if you bless yourself and say grace before eating. My wife and I do this all the time now when we're out in public. This is especially powerful if you stop to pray in front of those whom you've invited to a Church pancake breakfast or a picnic. It shows that you don't hide your relationship with Christ.

There is a young man in our parish – I'm going to guess he's about 13 or 14. He regularly serves at Mass. He is giving witness that he isn't concerned about the opinion of non-believers or even young people who attend Church but don't believe it's cool to do service at Mass.

To you young men... the problem as I see it is many – perhaps most of us were raised with the idea that Church is something to do. Oh yes – we go to church every Sunday... well – hopefully you go every Sunday. And what I want you to hear is.... Church isn't something you do... like a rule or a practice. Catholic Christian Church is something you live.

Again, you may not have been told this, but as Christians – you are called to be of service to Christ, to the Church and to the people in this world. And if you are sincere and you pray about it, you will be given gifts by God to help others. You may not be given gifts of healing or great preaching – but you may be given the heart to help an elderly person who lives near you. You may be given the gift and desire to serve at Church.

You may be given the gift of helping others to find a relationship with God... with Christ the Son of the Father.

These are gifts that will come to those who live their faith... not those who think they 'practice' the faith by just coming to Mass or service on a Sunday.

So I invite you to think about this. In your own way pray about this. Open your mind and heart to God's will in your life. About your faith... do it... live it... and when you need to – go off and away some place and spend some quiet time... Then you too will say the words of today's Responsorial Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In wonderful places he gives me rest; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

Reading 1

Jer 23:1-6

A Reading from the Prophet Jeremiah

Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the LORD. Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, against the shepherds who shepherd my people: You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds. I myself will gather the remnant of my flock from all the lands to which I have driven them and bring them back to their meadow; there they shall increase and multiply. I will appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing, says the LORD.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when 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. This is the name they give him: "The LORD our justice."

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 23:1-3, 3-4, 5, 6

R. (1) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Reading II

A Reading from the Letter to the Ephesians

Eph 2:13-18

Brothers and sisters: In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it.

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.

Gospel

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. Glory to You O Lord.

Mk 6:30-34

The apostles gathered together with Jesus and reported all they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." People were coming and going in great numbers, and they had no opportunity even to eat. So they went off in the boat by themselves to a deserted place. People saw them leaving and many came to know about it. They hastened there on foot from all the towns and arrived at the place before them.

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.

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.