



Bringing Home the Word

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

July 21, 2024

Follow the Leader

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

This is not simply the name of a childhood game. It is actually an essential directive for living. We learn so many things in life because we followed someone. That is how we learned to read, to play a musical instrument, to speak another language, to understand social behavior.

Many nations at the time of Jeremiah represented their kings as shepherds, leading the people to verdant pastures and restful waters. We see this in the art they left behind. However, many of the kings of Jeremiah's day were not good leaders—not attentive shepherds, nor

faithful to God, who had entrusted the people to their care. Consequently, God stepped in to be their shepherd. This is the image of the divine shepherd found in Psalm 23. Jesus also characterized religious leaders as shepherds. He was distraught that the people were “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34).

Is this situation different today? Many are eager to follow a leader, but which one? Ours is a multicultural, pluralistic, international society with innumerable viewpoints. Voices cry out from many corners, demanding to be heard. But which voice should we heed? Which worldly leaders should we follow? It's apparent that our leaders, both civic and religious, disagree on certain matters. What are we to do? The issue is not “with whom do I agree?” but rather “whose point of view makes me a better person? More compassionate? More understanding? More selfless? More Christlike?” Are we following the right leader? †

Sunday Readings

Jeremiah 23:1–6

I will raise up shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear or be terrified; none shall be missing.

Ephesians 2:13–18

Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ.

Mark 6:30–34

His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Voices cry out from many corners, demanding to be heard. But which voice should we heed?

A Word from Pope Francis

Compassion is born from contemplation. If we learn to truly rest, we become capable of true compassion.... We need—listen to this—we need an “ecology of the heart,” that is made up of rest, contemplation and compassion. Let us take advantage of the summertime for this! It will help us quite a bit.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- The Good Shepherd seeks to unite, not divide. Who are the Good Shepherds today?
- Jesus the Good Shepherd cares for all. Do we?

Infinite Layers of Mystery

Kathleen M. Basi

We live in a world where science reveals wonders as distant as the far reaches of the universe and as intimate as our own DNA. We prize knowledge and revere those who help us reach greater understanding of the world and ourselves. It is a good thing to seek wisdom, but focusing too much on intellect makes it easy to get jaded about the things that defy scientific testing. We think we should be able to pull apart the strands of the universe and reduce everything to its components. When we can't, we start worrying that we're being taken for a ride.

Yet mystery surrounds us. In every age, humans have looked to the night sky with wonder and awe, marveling at the size of the universe and our own tiny



place within it. And who contemplates the death of a child without asking, "Why?" Mystery can inspire awe; it can deepen grief; it can challenge our faith. As we long to understand the earth, so we long to understand the one who

made us. Yet some things will always remain unfathomable. The tension between these two opposing realities will not be resolved on this side of eternity. The deeper we dig, the more we will understand about God. Yet the more we understand, the more layers of mystery are revealed.

As frustrating as it may seem, that's a good thing. Contemplating all that cannot be understood offers a much-needed balanced perspective, namely: there is a bright center of the universe, and I am not it. As hard as it may be to do this, living the faith means accepting, even embracing the reality that not all things can be known and understood. At least not now. The poet Rainer Maria Rilke said it beautifully in his *Letters to a Young Poet* when he wrote about being patient toward the unknown, embracing the questions within, and living in the moment to uncover the answers. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "End-of-Life Moral Issues" by Thomas A. Shannon, PhD

When we face difficult decisions at the end of life, we should consider what the intervention does to the patient and for the patient. Modern medicine, as good as it is, cannot cure everything. We must also remember that we are finite beings; we do not live forever. Moving from attempting to cure to providing comfort care is a difficult decision, but it may be one of the most significant gifts we can give to a loved one because it will make the final days more peaceful by helping to relieve his or her suffering and providing the comfort of companionship. †

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PRAYER

Caring God, bless us with good rest and eyes open to the beauty that surrounds us so that we may be patient and compassionate people. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 22–27

Monday, St. Mary Magdalene: Sg 3:1–4b
or 2 Cor 5:14–17 / Jn 20:1–2, 11–18

Tuesday, Weekday:
Mi 7:14–15, 18–20 / Mt 12:46–50

Wednesday, Weekday:
Jer 1:1, 4–10 / Mt 13:1–9

Thursday, St. James:
2 Cor 4:7–15 / Mt 20:20–28

Friday, Sts. Joachim and Anne:
Jer 3:14–17 / Mt 13:18–23

Saturday, Weekday:
Jer 7:1–11 / Mt 13:24–30

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