

himself out of the two of them and by restoring peace through the cross, to unite them both in a single Body and reconcile them with God. In his own person he killed the hostility. Later he came to bring the good news of peace, peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near at hand. Through him, both of us have in the one Spirit our way to come to the Father.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! My sheep listen to my voice, says the Lord; I know them, and they follow me. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

They were as sheep without a shepherd.

The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length.

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / B

18 JULY 2021

TIME FOR A NEW BEGINNING

The scene of Jesus stepping ashore and taking pity on the crowds who were desperately looking for a guide and shepherd has always been a poignant and moving one. Jesus had taken the disciples aside after the rigours of their mission of preaching. It was to be a moment of rest and reflection, of coming to terms with what they had experienced and learned in their new-found mission. Perhaps what they learn, more than anything else, is the hunger and need the people have for what Jesus has to offer by his presence and teaching.

Centuries before, Jeremiah had spoken of God's promise to shepherd the people of Israel and to raise up new shepherds, and a truly wise king. With the mission of the Twelve, and the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus the people have the eyes to see that God's promises are being fulfilled. The time for a new beginning has come.

Paul and the communities formed by him had no experience of the earthly mission of Jesus and it naturally led them to ponder on what difference the life and death of Jesus had made. Today's reading from Ephesians invites us to see the death of Jesus as the means that God used to bring a new humanity to birth. The age-old division between Jews and Gentiles has now been broken down. It is as though Jesus on the cross took to himself all our anger, violence and division, transforming it by the power of his healing and self-giving love.

FIRST READING

Jer 23: 1-6

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

The remnant of my flock I will gather to me, and bring them back to their pastures.

'Doom for the shepherds who allow the flock of my pasture to be destroyed and scattered – it is the Lord who speaks! This, therefore, is what the Lord, the God of Israel says about the shepherds in charge of my people: You have let my flock be scattered and go wandering and have not taken care of them. Right, I will take care of you for your misdeeds – it is the Lord who speaks! But the remnant of my flock I myself will gather from all the countries where I have dispersed them, and will bring them back to their pastures: they shall be fruitful and increase in numbers. I will raise up shepherds to look after them and pasture them; no fear, no terror for them any more; not one shall be lost – it is the Lord who speaks!

'See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks –

when I will raise a virtuous Branch for David,

who will reign as true king and be wise, practising honesty and integrity in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel dwell in confidence.

And this is the name he will be called: The Lord-our-integrity.'

■ **The word of the Lord.**

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 22. R. v. 2

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

1. The Lord is my shepherd; / there is nothing I shall want. / Fresh and green are the pastures / where he gives me repose. / Near restful waters he leads me, / to revive my drooping spirit. **R.**



2. He guides me along the right path; / he is true to his name. / If I should walk in the valley of darkness / no evil would I fear. / You are there with your crook and your staff; / with these you give me comfort. **R.**

3. You have prepared a banquet for me / in the sight of my foes. / My head you have anointed with oil; / my cup is overflowing. **R.**

4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me / all the days of my life. / In the Lord's own house shall I dwell / for ever and ever. **R.**

SECOND READING

Eph 2: 13-18

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

Christ, our peace, has made us one.

In Christ Jesus, you that used to be so far apart from us have been brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he is the peace between us, and has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart, actually destroying in his own person the hostility caused by the rules and decrees of the Law. This was to create one single New Man in

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