

(Homily for the readings of the 16th Week in Ordinary Time-B)

In the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah you may be thinking how the reading fits so well with the problems facing the leadership of the Catholic Church today and how we, Catholics in general, are being punished in the civil courts and in the court of public opinion.

You may have wondered how the Church, through its diverse and intensive selective processes, could have allowed such travesties to happen? I'm sure that's the same question the Hebrews had of the tragedies that afflicted them, causing their exile and domination by foreigners due to the human weakness of their kings, their "shepherds", those who were to have been selected by GOD.

Maybe one answer is that good men sometimes fall prey to their human weaknesses. After all, even the greatest man in the world today is still JUST HUMAN, and guarding our human emotions and desires ON OUR OWN can be an overwhelming task for some, if not for all of us.

But there's the catch phrase – "On our own". We, as Catholics, KNOW we don't have to face life alone, on our own. We have family; we have friends; we have community; **we have Christ!** We have his words to counsel our thoughts. We feast on his body and blood for spiritual strength. We share in an over-abundance of grace given to us daily through prayer and the sacraments. And as good brothers and sisters we hold ourselves and each other accountable for our words and deeds, correcting one another when necessary.

Certainly those at the higher levels of Church, business, governments, feel they are in charge and may have all the answers, but in order to shepherd those under their care they also need to be attuned to their flocks' needs and aware of their graver responsibility to those they lead. The Good Shepherd **must** retain closeness with God.

Each of us, depending on our vocations in life, have been, are now, or may be in the future, called to be a shepherd of others. I look at my own life as a parent sharing in the caring and raising of our children; as an instructor in the Air Force training recruits in new skills; as a catechist and educator in

our schools in forming young minds and hearts in the love that Jesus has for them and how to show love appropriately; and to a minimal degree as a deacon as I try to bring the Word of God more alive to you in the reading of the gospel and in my encouraging you to share the graces and blessings you receive every day with those in need.

I believe we are all called at some time to shepherd, to **GUIDE AND CARE FOR** someone, and we do it best when we shepherd in the name of and with Jesus. I say this because at our baptism we were anointed as priest, prophet, and **KING** with the pouring of oil on our head. Infused with the gifts of the Holy Spirit we need just put those gifts into action throughout our life.

And in those times when we feel run down, worn out, or drawn toward temptation, Jesus calls us to come away with him to a deserted place to **REST** with him in prayer. To get away from it all and to relax **WE** take a vacation – and we end up where everyone else is and wear ourselves out trying to relax. Not really what Jesus had in mind. To get away from it all and to relax Jesus calls us to retreat, to spend **QUIET** time in prayer and meditation.

A retreat, that time in prayer and meditation, could be on your deck at home on a cool summer evening for even just an hour or less. It could be in the adoration chapel. It could be at a retreat center for an extended weekend or more. It could even be on the lake with friends, as it was for the apostles as they and Jesus tried to get away from the crowds, to go off “to a deserted place and rest a while.”

Maybe the Apostles should have spent more time on the boat in the middle of the lake, except that it appears it was more important to have just **SOME** time away as the people showed themselves to Jesus as needing **HIM, HIS** presence, the presence of the Word of God, a shepherd who cares.

Jesus very well understood his mission, and so he disembarked and “began to teach them many things.” We, like the apostles, are all called to mission, and to act like Jesus, to be self-giving and to teach others about the love of God, and to shepherd well those placed in our care.