

GOSPEL

MARK 6:30-34

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.

**A REFLECTION
BY POPE FRANCIS**

Today’s Gospel passage tells us that after their first mission, the Apostles returned to Jesus and told him “all that they had done and taught”. After the experience of the mission, which was undoubtedly thrilling but also arduous, they needed to rest. And understanding this well, Jesus wished to give them some relief and said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest for a while”. But Jesus’ intention could not be fulfilled this time because the crowd, guessing the location of the lonely place where he would take the disciples by boat, ran there and got there ahead of them.

The same can happen today. At times we are not able to complete our projects because something urgent and unexpected occurs, disrupting our plans and [this] requires flexibility and being available to the needs of others.

In these situations, we are called to imitate what Jesus did: “As he landed he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things”. With this brief sentence, the Evangelist offers us a *flash* of singular intensity, taking a snapshot of the eyes of the divine Master and his teaching. Let us observe the three verbs in this frame: *to see, to have compassion, to teach*. We

can call them the Shepherd’s verbs.

The *gaze* of Jesus is not a neutral one — or worse, a cold and detached one because Jesus always looks with the eyes of the heart. And his heart is so tender and filled with *compassion*, that he is able to understand even the most hidden needs of people. Moreover, his compassion does not simply suggest an emotional response toward people in situations of distress. It is much more. It is God’s attitude and predisposition toward mankind and its history. Jesus appears as the fulfillment of God’s concern and care for his people.

Because Jesus was moved when he saw all those people in need of guidance and help, we would now expect him to perform some miracles. Instead, he began *teaching* them many things. This is the first bread that the Messiah offers to the starving and lost crowd; the bread of the Word. We all need the Word of truth to guide and illuminate our way. Without the truth which is Christ himself, it is not possible to find the right direction in life. When we distance ourselves from Jesus and his love, we become lost and life is transformed into disappointment and dissatisfaction. With Jesus by our side, we can proceed with confidence and overcome all trials, advancing in love toward God and neighbour. Jesus gave himself for others, thus becoming an example of love and service for each of us.

May Mary Most Holy help us to bear the problems, suffering and difficulties of our neighbours with an attitude of sharing and service.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you do to “come away to some lonely place... and rest for a while”?
- It’s been said, “don’t neglect the important for the urgent”. The Apostles needed to rest but Jesus responded to the urgent situation in front of him. How do you discern what to do in this situation?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.