

FR. JOHN'S HOMILY

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 18, 2021

There is a story about a little boy and his father. The little boy looked forward to each day when his Dad would return home from work. The little boy wanted his father's attention. The Dad was tired from a long day of work, wanted a moment to himself to read the paper. So to distract his son for a few minutes he cut up a picture of an animal in the paper and asked his son to put it together. The little boy went off and in a short time he was back with the picture put back together. That was quick the Father thought, and gave him a more difficult picture. It was a picture of the world, twice as many pieces. The father thought this would take longer. In a shorter time than the first, his son was back. The father said, "Son, how did you put the puzzle together so quickly?" The little boy said, "Dad, it was easy, on the back side was a picture of a child. I put the child together and the world came together." The dad was so moved by what his little boy just said that he put the paper down and they went outside to play.

It is a wonderful story that contain a lot of truth and hope. Put the child together and the world too comes together. It sounds very simple in our complex and confusing world, but it is true. The opposite is also true: don't put the child together and the world becomes broken. We have to admit today our world is out of order and our lives are out of order. There are many reasons to explain this brokenness but one is a lack of good leaders.

There is a great lack of trust in our leadership today. One current example is those who are not vaccinated, especially here in Arkansas. I am sure everyone saw that we were on the national news this week for the rise of the Delta Variant. One of the reasons for the unvaccinated is they don't trust the federal government or health organizations. The sad news is that many are getting sick and more are dying from the virus. The call for the common good is to get vaccinated. (Reasons for the Vaccine shot - through prayer, listening to our Holy Father, our Bishop, and knowing it was best for my Church and school, and for my Family)

Our world is broken and out of order. So who will put the world and the child back together again, give us right direction and order in life? Who will lead us during this during these uncertain times?

We need good leaders. So today we look for leadership in the image of shepherds. The shepherd as an image of authority, all authority. The shepherd's role applies to all kind of leadership, but for our purpose here, it is about Spiritual Leadership. This is about our Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, it is about all Pastors of every denomination, and this Spiritual Leadership includes you; parents, teachers, coaches, instructors, Catechist, etc... all of us are called to be Spiritual Leaders.

In our First Reading from the prophet Jeremiah, he was a great Spiritual Leader of his day. He was willing to be God's messenger and called all leaders to repentance, who were out of order. The leaders had lost their faith. They cared only for themselves, therefore the people were neglected and so many were led astray. They were like sheep

without a shepherd. Jeremiah being the faithful prophet of God, was doing his part to bring right order to people's lives and to his world. God sees what is happening to His people and now He speaks through His prophet: I will gather the remnant of my flock. I will appoint shepherds (through the House of David) so there will be no need to fear and tremble, and none shall be missing.

The shepherd God will give us a leader who will govern wisely, and He shall do what is just and right in the land. I am sure this gave God's people hope during their uncertain times. God's word give us hope in our uncertain times.

We know that Jeremiah's words are referring to Jesus, who will be our Good Shepherd. The Shepherd, as Jeremiah says, will govern wisely, and He shall do what is right and just. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for his sheep. God loved the world so much He gave us His only Son. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and we can hear about his love for his people today in Mark's Gospel.

We hear about Jesus's disciples coming back from ministry, and giving Him a report of the Good News. People were being healed, one heart at a time, therefore the world was being healed. He talks to His disciples of the importance of resting, *Come and rest awhile*. In ministry, we know the importance of resting with Jesus. Without these moments of resting, we too will soon find ourselves out of order, for failing to hear Jesus's words. And as they begin to rest, we hear the crowd would not let them. They were like sheep without a shepherd. But here is different, they have Jesus, the Good Shepherd with them.

Jesus being the Good Shepherd sees the vast crowd. His heart was moved with pity for them, and He began to teach them many things. Jesus is teaching us about listening to His voice. The sheep knows the voice of one true Shepherd. And as his followers we are called to follow His voice. The more we do so, the more our lives are in right order. We will become good spiritual leaders for others. To do so, we must follow the voice of Jesus our Good Shepherd. There is no other leader, Shepherd, or voice to follow that can give what Jesus gives: Healing, Peace, Hope, Comfort, Right Order etc.....

There are prayers the priest prays to himself before receiving communion and just before proclaiming Behold the Lamb of God..... lately this is the one I have been praying. *May the receiving of your Body and Blood, Lord Jesus Christ, not bring me to judgement and condemnation, but through your loving mercy be for me protection in mind and body and a healing remedy*. Since the Pandemic, I have offered this prayer at each Mass, I will pray again today. It give me peace knowing Jesus is the Healing Remedy for all our brokenness. Listen to voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd today; follow His voice to peace, refreshment and healing. Allowing Jesus to put right order into our lives, can bring right order to our families, our churches, our world. The Good Shepherd can heal the brokenness that is crying out.