

## 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

### GOSPEL

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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.

(Mark 6:30-34)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The image of the shepherd is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures to describe the relationship between God and his people Israel. They are the flock whom he will gather and protect.
- Our use of the term *pastoral* comes from this image of Christ as the shepherd of his flock.
- Jesus regularly took time to be alone, to pray and to contemplate God. Here he invites his followers to do the same.
- This is the only place in his gospel where Mark refers to the disciples as 'apostles'.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

In last week's gospel, we read of the disciples being sent out on their mission to preach, cast out devils and cure the sick. Their mission has been a great success and now they excitedly return to tell Jesus of 'all they had done and taught'. They are weary but still the people come. They are so busy that they don't even have time to eat! Jesus is aware of their needs and insists that they find a quiet place to rest. But the crowds too have their needs and they follow Jesus and the disciples, yearning for answers to their problems. Jesus is also moved with compassion when he sees the needs of the people. They are like lost sheep who are desperately searching for truth but don't know where to find it, so he sets himself the task of teaching them and bringing them closer to that truth. Jesus meets the needs of both the disciples and the crowds and thus becomes the 'good shepherd' who will look after his flock.

- In what ways is Jesus meeting your needs at the moment?
- You could introduce different styles of prayer, particularly meditation, which catechumens could practice or develop.

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the many competing demands on your time and your attention? How do you find solitude and quiet in the midst of this busyness?
- Have you ever felt like a 'sheep without a shepherd', a little lost and unsure?
- How eager are you in pursuing Christ? Are you hurrying towards faith?
- Make time this week to be alone to reflect on your journey; to rest before God.
- Pray the well-known and loved Psalm 23 often this week:

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

