

livingtheword

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Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

Reading 1 Acts 13:14, 43-52

Paul and Barnabas continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered the synagogue and took their seats. Many Jews and worshipers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said. Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth."

The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe, and the word of the Lord continued to spread through the whole region. The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshipers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 100:1-2, 3, 5

R. (3c) We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
serve the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful song.

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Know that the LORD is God;
he made us, his we are;
his people, the flock he tends.

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

The LORD is good:

his kindness endures forever,
and his faithfulness, to all generations.

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Reading 2 Rev 7:9, 14b-17

I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.

Then one of the elders said to me, "These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"For this reason they stand before God's throne and worship him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will

shelter them. They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them. For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Gospel Jn 10:27-30

Jesus said:

“My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand. The Father and I are one.”

Vocation Sunday

Every 4th Sunday of Easter the Church places before us Jesus as the ‘Good Shepherd’. It is a time we pray for more vocations in the Church.

In Palestine / Israel the image of the Shepherd is very powerful. There are no fences. The Shepherd walks around the hills - and even along modern streets - and the sheep follow. They know the Shepherd loves and cares for them. The sheep know they will be led safely to grass, water, shelter.

In God’s plan for the Church, some sheep are called to become Priests with the heart of the Good Shepherd. Can you see the joy in this calling? Can you name a priest who has been a ‘good shepherd’ for you? Have you prayed for, encouraged someone to consider ‘Priesthood’? Are you growing in awareness of your ‘call’ / vocation?

Reflection Questions

- Reading the passages slowly and reflectively, what word, phrase or idea strikes you in the readings? (circle or underline them)
- What do you think God is trying to say to you personally through these words?

Vocation Sunday (Good Shepherd Sunday)

- In the 50 days after Easter the Church listens continuously to the Acts of the Apostles (the ‘gospel’ of the Church as it is sometimes called). Paul’s first missionary journey lasted some 13 years! He encountered violent abuse and persecution. But he could not stop sharing the message of God’s love, forgiveness and the truth revealed in Jesus. Do you know a missionary in the Church? What do you think the ‘mission’ is in your own country, parish?
- Shaking dust off one’s feet was a ritual action Jews performed when returning from Gentile (non-believing) lands. When Paul and Barnabas did this action to the Jews and went to the Gentiles it would have been interpreted as a great insult. Sometimes it requires great courage to move ‘outside’ traditional boundaries. Have you experienced a missionary ‘zeal’ to go further than what is normal and acceptable to live and bring Christ to others? What happened?

Anzac Day

- Revelation provides a heavenly image of those who have endured great persecution and sacrificed their life for peace, justice, freedom. Their white robes symbolise these inner virtues. Have you recognised the freedom of your country and your life has been won at great ‘cost’ by those who have gone before you. What do you think this great multitude would say to you ‘today’?
- The context of John 10 is the great Jewish ‘Feast of Dedication’. It was a celebration of military victory of Judas Maccabeaus who led an army (164BCE) against the occupying Greeks who had desecrated the Jewish Temple by putting the Greek god Zeus on the altar making it ‘unclean’. (See Dan 8:13) They killed and chased out their oppressors, destroyed false idols, built a new altar and rededicated the Temple. In Jn 10 they ask Jesus if he is the promised Messiah - and will he raise up arms and inspire an Army to overcome the occupying Roman forces!? He responds: he is the Good Shepherd. Salvation and healing of the world will come through listening to his voice not the taking up of arms. A soldier or shepherd. What are the similarities and differences of these two ‘images’?