

Are we not shepherd to one another?

Brothers and sisters, today the Lord is disappointed with those he has entrusted with his ministry.

Most ministers were not doing good service to God and humanity. They were greedy, uncharitable and without kindness to God's people. They were detached from the reality and the challenges faced by people around them. They were exploitative of the house of God and his people. They did not provide knowledge and protection to those entrusted to them.

Similarly, the "sheepfold" among themselves was marked by selfishness with visible signs showing lack of sympathy for one another. Hence, those who suffered bore the burden of life and the opportune ones lived in uncensored pleasures. This is still true of the church of Christ today.

But the differences between the leaders and the people of God, and between the fulfilled and the members of the impoverished, mark of the true church of Christ. Jesus prayed for a church which is communal in nature and charitable in character. In our own time, Christianity is still marked with leadership touse, "lordshipism", crises of identity and the phobia of the gospel message. In our time, the Lord calls the laity to extra ordinary missions. The faithful sometimes undermine their prophetic role and their mission to the world.

Because of all these challenges of our faith, the gospel of Jesus has suffered a distorted growth. For many people, it seems the church is filled with people. Well, that is not really true. Do you know that more than 63% of Catholics don't go to church regularly? Do you see the number of the faithful in the church during Easter and Christmas? All those are Catholics; and think of those who stopped worshipping completely for years. Both the shepherd and the sheepfold should make sincere efforts to bring these children of God (the other sheepfold) back home.

Back to the readings, the imaging of today's scripture regarding the shepherd and the sheep, has to be understood in their cultural context. Within the Jewish culture, a good percentage of the land is grassy and many families even still are herders and shepherds. Shepherds and herders have the role of caring for their sheep. This is a great selfless responsibility, and a role which traditionally is in image of their priests and Levites. In Christendom, this image of caring is extended to priests, ordained ministers and members of the religious orders of our church. After the second Vatican Council, the kingly prophetic and priestly role of the church (which includes caring for one another) is extended to the lay faith of the church. Hence, we are all called to be shepherd to one another – to care and guide one another to Jesus – through word and deeds.

This caring role of the laity is an ever growing and extremely important role today because it is about time for the people of God to fulfill their evangelical mission in caring for the body, soul and spiritual welfare of one another.

Jesus himself teaches us how we should care for on another by leading his disciples away from the noisy world to a place of tranquility (peace) where they may rest their mind and body at least for a moment. He led them to a place where they could listen to one another and pray as a fold. He offered them unity and communion.

When I think of Jesus the Lord, I imagine many aspects of his persona. One of the most important of his images is the one presented in today's second reading. Jesus is the source of our unity and peace. He brings us all together in the unity of God's peace. This unity and peace is so dearly needed in our world and country today.

So, my beloved, let us implant unity and peace of Jesus in our divisive world that through him we may foster a better world of justice and communal inclusiveness.

ARE WE NOT SHEPHERD TO ONE ANOTHER???