

## Sixteenth Sunday of the Year

### The shepherd and his flock

#### INTRODUCTION

A good shepherd always puts the needs of his flock first. Today we hear how Jesus, 'the Good Shepherd', put the needs of others before his own.

#### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read this prayer:  
The candle flame is warm and bright,  
it changes darkness into light.  
We feel its warmth and see its glow,  
and when we look at it we know,  
the light of Christ is burning bright,  
for we are children of the light.

#### SORRY

Listen to this story Jesus told:

One day a shepherd found that one of his flock was missing, so he left the other ninety-nine sheep, and went off to look for it. He searched and searched until he found it, because every one of his sheep was precious to him.

If we have not been good, and have lost our way,  
let us ask Jesus to forgive us  
and to lead us back to his flock.

#### GLORIA

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 3:  
*Alleluia, alleluia.*

#### GOSPEL (cf Mark 6:30-34)

After preaching to the people and curing many that were sick, the apostles returned to Jesus, and told him everything that they had said and done. As usual, crowds of people had followed them; the apostles were feeling tired and in need of a rest. Jesus said to them, 'We will go somewhere quiet and spend some time alone.'

However when Jesus and his friends arrived, a crowd of people had already gathered to meet them. When Jesus saw them, he was filled with pity, because they were like sheep without a shepherd to care for them. He sat down on the hillside and began to teach them.

#### DISCUSSION

Where had the apostles been? (Recall last week's Gospel.)

When they returned to Jesus, what did they

find? – Wherever Jesus travelled, news soon reached the local people, and it was not long before a crowd of people flocked around him. The apostles were tired after their journeys and eager to spend time telling Jesus about everything that had happened. Jesus was surrounded by people wanting his attention.

What did Jesus suggest that they do? – Jesus suggested that they sail off to find some peace and quiet.

Things did not go quite as planned! What did they find when they moored their boat? – People had guessed their plan and when they arrived a crowd had already gathered.

What did Jesus do? Did he grow impatient or angry? – Jesus felt a deep sense of love for his followers, and as always, put their needs before his own. The 'good shepherd' knew that these people were his flock. They relied on him to guide and look after them, just as a good shepherd guides and looks after his sheep. He would never let them down or turn them away.

#### ACTIVITY

Copy the adaptation of *Psalm 23* on to a large sheet of paper. Cut out a 'Good Shepherd' figure and enough sheep for each child. Use these to decorate the words of the prayer and encourage the children to illustrate the picture by drawing tufts of green grass, pools of water, a path etc. Alternatively hand out the colouring in picture.

#### CREED

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Read *Psalm 23* aloud together and discuss the words and illustrations with the children.

#### Psalm 23

The Good Shepherd takes care of all my needs:  
He leads me to lush green meadows  
and crystal clear pools.  
He guides and protects me  
and I grow strong in his care.  
When night falls, I am not afraid,  
for he is always beside me  
to protect me from harm.  
When he calls, I will follow,  
knowing that his love for me  
will last forever.