

Singing Our Faith

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 22, 2018

This Sunday's readings echo the 4th Sunday of Easter, also known as "Good Shepherd Sunday." While those readings focus on Jesus as the Good Shepherd, Sunday's readings emphasize the Apostles' ministry as shepherds – the gospel begins with them coming back to Jesus and reporting the works they had done in the community. The first reading from Jeremiah begins with the stern statement, "Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the LORD." These readings speak to Church leaders and lay people alike. In a sense we are all shepherds, whether it be in our role as parents, as ministry leaders, or simply as Catholics trying to display the qualities of Christ to others in the world. In all these roles, our goal is to lead and guide people to Christ, not scatter and mislead the flock.

You may recognize Sunday's opening hymn "Shepherd of Souls" from a "past life" or from hearing it at other parishes. While it hasn't been sung at St. Clare in recent years, it's a tried and true hymn in the Catholic repertoire. The tune "St. Agnes" was written by John B. Dykes (1823-1876), an English clergyman, composer, and hymn author. It's named after St. Agnes the martyr.

The text was penned by James Montgomery (1771-1854), a minister of the Moravian Church. It's worth noting that the Moravian Church, while not in communion with the Catholic Church, believes in the true presence in the Eucharist, although their explanation is not as precise or detailed as the Catholic Church. This goes for most

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mainline Protestant churches as well. After their split with Rome, many of these denominations held on to basic doctrines for the first couple generations of their existence. As centuries have gone by, these denominations have slowly watered down the Eucharist to simply a “symbol” rather than the true presence of Christ. That’s why this hymn and others sound very Catholic when they talk about the Eucharist.

“Shepherd of Souls” ties in to the shepherd theme of Sunday’s readings, while also looking a week ahead when we begin hearing the Bread of Life Discourse from St. John’s gospel. The first stanza references the Israelites’ journey in Exodus with the phrases “manna in the wilderness” and “water from the rock” (the Eucharist is the “new manna”). The parallels continue in the second stanza, naming us as travelers to Heaven, just as the Israelites were heading to the Promise Land. The third stanza expresses the closeness of Christ in the Eucharist and also references today’s psalm (23) – “...and spread your table in our heart.” Stanza four recognizes the Eucharist as heavenly food for our journey to eternal life.

As we reflect on the readings and our various roles as shepherds, let’s pray that the Holy Spirit will make us good ambassadors of Christ his one, true Church. And that our actions may foster Christian unity – that all may be one with Christ through the Church and its sacraments.

Stephen Eros, Director of Liturgy and Music

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Shepherd of Souls



1. Shep - herd of souls, re - fresh and bless
2. We would not live by bread a - lone,
3. Be known to us in break - ing bread,
4. Lord, sup with us in love di - vine;



Your cho - sen pil - grim flock With man - na in the
But by your word of grace, In strength of which we
But do not then de - part; Sav - ior, a - bide with
Your Bod - y and your Blood, That liv - ing bread, that



wil - der - ness, With wa - ter from the rock.
trav - el on To our a - bid - ing place.
us, and spread Your ta - ble in our heart.
heav'n - ly wine, Be our im - mor - tal food.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt.
Tune: ST. AGNES, CM; John B. Dykes, 1823–1876; harm. by Richard Proulx, 1937–2010