

# Sixteenth Sunday In Ordinary Time

Like Sheep without a Shepherd

*A reflection from Brian Wigger, Pastoral Associate*

It seems for decades political commentators, legislators and barroom philosophers have been talking about the concerns the President has or have not voiced: we as citizens of these United States are concerned about confidence in leadership, a concern about the morale and the morals of the country. I find it interesting how timely this weekend's Gospel is. Because both the first reading and the Gospel deals with the very things people have been talking about these past months, years, days – the quality of leadership.

Back in Christ's day and even before the people were agriculture minded; the issues were not energy or inflation, crime or government. The issues were survival issues. People looked to their leaders to simply give them food to eat and take care of them, we today consider this just basic needs. Their overall concern was with the quality of life, its people.

For this reason, Christ compared leaders to shepherds. Either in reality or the religious sense, a shepherd knows his sheep. They know what the needs are and hears the cries of the weak and helpless and lost. They come with strength and a sense of true identity and not power or prestige.

The comparison Christ uses in the Gospel is valid not only in civil life but in all of humankind. Leaders don't have to be bullies. They have to want to know what people's needs are. They have to live a visible example so that the rest will follow naturally. Perhaps this is what we lack not only in big government, but in the Church as well. We have a lack of leadership in both the Church and in other institutions.

But the people at the top aren't always to blame. God will not have any scapegoats. In Christianity there is but one leader, and that is Christ. Change has been a big factor, but the real crisis perhaps is that we forgot that Christ is still the leader. We somehow make the mistake of disassociating him from the Church. At times we cut ourselves off from the true presence of the Spirit. Too much individualism has bred cracks in the ship. If

we are to regain it we may we need to admit that a new commitment is to be made and a strong renewed trust that Christ is still at the helm.

Change is a part of life. Many don't like it. Many have let it pass way beyond them. In spite of flawed characters and leaders Jesus still has mercy on us like a shepherd views his sheep.

I marvel every weekend at the great people at Mass who hold on to that faith and will not let it go and will not drift and refuse to get lost - that is shepherding.