

Homily of 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (July 22, 2018)

The time Jeremiah prophesied in Israel was a time of religious and moral crises. Political rulers and religious leaders were deep in corruption and injustice. The poor were neglected and oppressed. The true God was no longer worshipped with seriousness. Worship of foreign gods became a common practice. In the first reading, Jeremiah confronted the rulers and leaders for their derailment. “Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock.” Jeremiah prophesied the coming of the true and good shepherd, “the Lord our justice,” “who will govern wisely.”

Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophecy. Unlike the shepherds during the time of Jeremiah, when Jesus saw the vast crowd, “his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things.” St. Paul says in the second reading, “He came and preached peace to those who were far off and peace to those who are near...” St. Paul says, “For he is our peace, who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity...”

We continue to pray for our church shepherds and our economic and political shepherds that they may govern wisely so that they do not mislead and scatter the flock. We pray that our rulers and leaders become people of justice and peace who, like Jesus, aim at breaking down dividing wall of enmity. We pray that rulers and leaders rule and lead the people with compassion. Our rulers and leaders are supposed to be called, as Isaiah prophesied, “Repairer of Broken Walls, and Restorer of Streets and Dwellings” (Isaiah 58:12). The crises and wars in many parts of the world is because rulers and leaders, by their words and actions, mislead and scatter the flock. The rulers and leaders do not govern wisely; they are corrupt and unjust; they do not follow the path of peace; and they rule and lead without compassion.

This exhortation does not exclude any of us; since, in one way or another, we have leadership roles in our homes, relationships, churches, associations, work places, and responsibilities. Wherever and whatever leadership role we find ourselves, we are to lead wisely in the foot-steps of the leadership qualities of Jesus Christ as shown to us in the readings of today: justice, peace, and compassion.

Let us break down dividing walls of enmity and become “Repairer of Broken Walls, and Restorer of Streets and Dwellings.”

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP