

**Thought for the week**  
**16th Sunday of the Year (B)**

This week's readings are consistent in outlining our need for genuine shepherds. Doom is certain for those shepherds who 'allow the flock to be destroyed and scattered', so the Lord says, according to the prophet Jeremiah.

The need for leaders is evident the world over- be they in governments or indeed in our very own communities and homes. I am struck by the insistence of the crowds in the Gospel, who were very clear about what they needed - a leader. They made a point too of ensuring the leaders they identified and persistently followed 'led' them.

I draw parallels in today's world - referenda and leadership elections have been a consistent theme in our news for a long time now, here at home and in various countries around the world. It is all very confusing, exhausting and one can very easily become discontented to the point of shutting out the sources of these persistent messages.

We are told in the gospel that Jesus told the disciples to go off and rest for a while after all the work they had been doing. I wonder what they did, while Jesus, who must have been tired himself, stepped ashore to teach the huge crowds who got to their resting place even before they did.

I wonder what this says about the work of a true Shepherd (leader). We are left in no doubt about the hard work involved. I am very sure that this can only be done with a huge dose of empathy, perseverance, self-sacrifice and strength to endure the hard work - qualities we have by God's grace. But qualities which we must constantly replenish through the one truest Shepherd of all, lest more sheep be scattered and lost.

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