

## Reflection for the 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage. You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for the years to come. Psalm 23*

This Sunday, the 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time we hear in our Gospel reading that the 12 Apostles return from their mission trip. We also hear of Jesus seeing a vast crowd and being moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. Our Responsorial Psalm this Sunday is Psalm 23 or 22 which is the most popular Psalm in the Old Testament. Many would say that the 6 verses that make up this Psalm are the most popular verses that are found in the Bible. Most of us would know this Psalm to be 23 but it is also known as Psalm 22. There are two ways in which the 150 Psalms are numbered, the most common today in the Masoretic or Hebrew numbering and the other in the Septuagint-Vulgate or Greek numbering.

This difference in numbering dates back to 700 AD or earlier. The Septuagint Hebrew Bible dates to 300 BC, and it contained the Septuagint-Vulgate numbering. This numbering was used by St. Jerome when he translated the Bible into Latin-Vulgate in the year 400 AD. The Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible was compiled by rabbis around the year 700 AD, and it contained the Masoretic numbering. This numbering was used by Martin Luther when he translated the Bible into German in the year 1534 AD. Both the Septuagint and Masoretic Hebrew Bibles were created by leaders of the Jewish community. The Septuagint was translated into Greek, where as the Masoretic remained in Hebrew.

In both the Masoretic and Septuagint, the number of Psalms remains 150, the difference between the two numbering systems is that in the Septuagint numbering system, Psalms 9, 10 and 114, 115 are combined as Psalms 9 and 113. Also in the Masoretic numbering Psalms 114, 115 and 146, 147 are combined to form Psalms 116 and 147. The difference in the Psalm numbering can have an impact when looking at certain Bible translations like the Douay-Rheims, or when reading older books that might be quoting a Psalm. Today most of the time the Masoretic numbering is used for the Psalms, but one can find articles today that reference the Septuagint numbering, but normally when the Septuagint numbering is used there is a reference to the Masoretic numbering so that everyone knows what Psalm is being spoken about.

Now that we have an understanding of how Psalm 23 can also be Psalm 22 it is time to look into this Psalm, which has such an amazing impact on people of faith. Traditionally Psalm 23 is believed to of been written by King David toward the end of his reign. King David reigned from 1010 to 970 BC. Some scholars estimate that King David wrote Psalm 23 in the year 1000 BC.

The 6 verses of Psalm 23 can be seen to two parts. The first section of this Psalm is comprised of verses 1 thru 4 and the second section of this Psalm is comprised of verses 5 and 6. The first 4 verses of Psalm 23 speaks of how the good Shepherd takes care of the author of this Psalm. The Shepherd knows where the green pastures are and where the still waters are, and He leads the psalmist to these places. In the wilderness where there is danger all around, the good Shepherd is there to guide his flock to safety. This is comforting and reassuring to the author of the Psalm. In the second section of the Psalm, verses 5 and 6 we hear of the good Shepherd now inviting the psalmist to a banquet in the house of the Lord. At the banquet, the psalmist has his head anointed with oil and his cup overflows. He finds the house of the Lord to be a place of great blessings.

In closing the first part of Psalm 23 speaks of the author's journey in this world. The psalmist knows that God is there for him, to help guide him in all moments of his life. In the second part of the Psalm we hear of the psalmist now in the heavenly kingdom, the house of the Lord, and all is amazing. Psalm 23 informs us what is possible if we turn to the Lord. This act of turning to the Lord is no easy task; rather it is a radical act of trusting in the Lord. By turning to the Lord, we are entrusting ourselves to God. Just like the sheep that entrust themselves to the good Shepherd and they find safety and comfort, so it is the same for us, not just in this world but in the next.