



Shepherd and Lamb

In today's Liturgy of the Word, all three readings and the psalm are concerned with authority and leadership. Recently, a new trend has been observed. Young people have been coming to conversion. Interestingly, they claim to be attracted because the Church speaks with authority.

In the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas descend on Antioch and take the lead. They preach *boldly* and anger the Jewish leaders. At Antioch, they offer the Good News which is refused by the Jewish congregations and gladly accepted by the Gentiles. The Church that is for everyone is born. The Messiah has come, but God has made His Christ a light for the nations that His salvation may reach the ends of the earth. The other readings are about the peculiar kind of leader the Christian Church claims to have. They describe Him as a Shepherd, a good shepherd.

Behold the Lamb of God, John the Baptist says. In the Book of Revelation, John depicts the Lamb who is *at the throne*, who will be your shepherd. The Lamb will lead the people to springs of living water.

A Lamb for humility, a Lamb that offers no defense when its life is taken away. The Lamb is Christ our Passover, who has been slain. The spotless Lamb of service and self-giving to the point of total sacrifice. But where is the Lamb found in John's vision? He is standing *at the throne*. Symbolically, the throne is the source of authority and power and rule.

The Lamb who takes the form of a servant, even to death on the cross is the Shepherd, the ruler, the guide. The Church, so long as she is truly being the Church, knows no other kind of leadership but that of loving service. The Church's authority cannot come from a position of superiority. Clergy and people have authority only when they pour themselves out in service for others. Their leadership is one of example – offered to others.

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