

persecution, and because they have washed their robes white again in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his sanctuary; and the One who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. They will never hunger or thirst again; neither the sun nor scorching wind will ever plague them, because the Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes.'

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 10:14

Alleluia, alleluia! I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my sheep, and mine know me. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 10:27-30

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

I give my sheep eternal life.

Jesus said:

'The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice;

I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life;

they will never be lost

and no one will ever steal them from me.

The Father who gave them to me is greater than anyone,

and no one can steal from the Father.

The Father and I are one.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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HOPE IN FACE OF TRIAL

The lives of each of us are touched by the realities of death and suffering in our world. As Christians, we are challenged to dig deep and explain the basis for our Christian hope. Why should Christians be hopeful? Why should we not give in to despair and disillusion? What is the basis for our belief that God's love is more powerful than the forces in our world which oppress and cause suffering?

Like ourselves, the first Christians had to deal with these problems. Opposition and persecution were realities for the earliest Christians and today's readings show something of the early Church's response to such difficulties. Paul and Barnabas faced the opposition of Jewish communities as they preached the good news of Jesus to Jews and Gentiles. They had come to see that the good news was meant for all nations and, by preaching the message of Jesus, the call to be a light for the nations would be fulfilled.

Some years later the Christian communities in Asia Minor were persecuted by Diocletian. It was a brutal and fearful time as Christians saw their brothers and sisters put to death. The book of the Apocalypse was written to encourage these Christians not to lose heart since Jesus had overcome death and he would shepherd them amidst their suffering.

The Johannine community had to deal with the distress and anguish that accompanied the expulsion of Christians from the synagogue. It is in the midst of such turmoil that they are reminded that with Jesus as their shepherd they need only listen to his voice to be assured of eternal life.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Acts 13:14,43-52

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

We are now turning to the gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the sabbath and took their seats.

When the meeting broke up, many Jews and devout converts joined Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them.

The next sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God. When they saw the crowds, the Jews, prompted by jealousy, used blasphemies and contradicted everything Paul said. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, 'We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said:

I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.'

It made the pagans very happy to hear this and they thanked the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers. Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole countryside.

But the Jews worked upon some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city and persuaded them to turn against Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their territory. So they shook the dust from their feet in defiance and went off to Iconium; but the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

■ The word of the Lord.



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 99:1-3.5

R. We are his people, the sheep of his flock. (or Alleluia!)

1. Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. / Come before him, singing for joy. **R.**

2. Know that he, the Lord, is God. / He made us, we belong to him, / we are his people, the sheep of his flock. **R.**

3. Indeed, how good is the Lord, / eternal his merciful love. / He is faithful from age to age. **R.**

SECOND READING

Apoc 7:9,14-17

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse

The Lamb who is at the throne will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water.

I, John, saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands. One of the elders said to me, 'These are the people who have been through the great