

1024  
1650

Midday Prayer - 684

26.7.79  
23.7.87

Do Want to Bless You  
[in Hosanna 12]  
Yas Lord  
(And Water 15)

In England the newspapers call it the "silly season": here, I suppose you might call it "on leave" - time, when it seems to become <sup>more</sup> difficult to get hold of people on the phone. It's hot, out: and sleepy, inside, <sup>in the middle of the day</sup> where air-conditioners are not as cold as they used be (or should be, anyhow).] Vacation time. And an atmosphere that spills over onto people who aren't on vacation, too. Like sleep in the routine of each day, we need in the routine of each year some break, some change and chance for re-freshment, recuperation of powers and energy for the work we do. Maybe it depends on what kind of work we do just what kind of vacation we should have, or <sup>for</sup> how long.... Just as some people seem to be able to do with relatively little sleep, and others need a regular and refreshing nap as well. One of the particularly nice human touches in the gospel of St Mark comes in the aftermath of Jesus' sending his apostles around the countryside to preach and teach and heal. When they came back, full of enthusiasm and excitement about their apostolic experience, he suggested a short break, <sup>a little</sup> rest, or holiday. But then, in another very human touch, that plan quickly got upset by the demands of other people and their determination to have their desires. "The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while': for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. But people saw them going, and many could guess where: and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them. So as he stepped ashore he saw a large crowd; and he took pity

on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length." - So much for their short rest. Then, as now, there were probably some people around to ask pleasantly, after their abortive rest, day 'How was your holiday?' For we're never all on the same time-schedule together, and our needs and demands of each other don't keep to neat time-slots. Even on holiday, you meet people and events that need your work - that's what the apostles found out that day, and Jesus was filled with compassion for the people for whom it wasn't a day of rest, for whom perhaps there was no rest. As summer holidays get well into stride, maybe it's a good lesson for all of us, that compassion and concern for others has no schedule, can afford no vacation. In countless ways, whether you're on holiday or not, people bring their needs to you - it may be only a thirst for someone to listen, for conversation. Or for physical help, to lift, carry, move, clean. People seek advice, encouragement, maybe simply a smile is enough to give someone a break from tension in their lives. Jesus gave his time, at some length, to teaching people who were lost, confused, like sheep without a shepherd, he said. This incident may well remind us to keep our eyes open to the needs of others, to feel their hurts, and to reach out to them. For from this we can't take any vacation. Think about it

Peace w/ Father 19 (2:05)  
Season 12

now, listening to this song for today: <sup>Come To Me</sup> 'Let there be peace' MUSIC PRAYERS

(Start Page p50)

The 'silly season' might remind one also of sheep, those silly beasts which

left to their own devices become a menace to themselves and others, running all over the place, not knowing where they're going. Jesus had compassion on the people who came to Him, not because they were silly, but because they were lost, not knowing what way to turn, where to go. Like sheep without a shepherd. Perhaps it's the influence of the word "sheepish" and its modern connotations that make us a bit uncomfortable with the frequent biblical imagery of sheep, <sup>and</sup> sheepfolds, <sup>and</sup> shepherds — that, and maybe our urban, industrial unfamiliarity with real live sheep. We feel we have a mind of our own and don't like the implications of the "sheep"-imagery. Yet beneath the surface and in many areas of life, many of us are like sheep without a shepherd, turning bitter and blither in pursuit of the latest fashions, <sup>and</sup> ideas, <sup>the</sup> "in" things, <sup>the latest</sup> gurus — something that would feed the hunger of the spirit. But of course the reason why we run about so much, why the fads and fashions fade, is that none of them can really satisfy the heart's hunger: as St Augustine remarked long ago, there is nothing in which our hearts can rest except in God alone. Christianity, too, has its fads and fashions, movements that come and go: behind them all, though, there is the abiding presence and the voice of Christ. He it is we've got to listen to, His teaching as He speaks to us "at some length": and to carry His word ourselves to all those others who don't know what way to turn, who also are looking for food and rest for the spirit. There is no holiday, vacation, from learning ourselves and helping others to learn of Christ — from becoming Christian, through all the events and encounters of our lives, even in holiday time.