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18 WEDNESDAYWEDNESDAY, 20<sup>th</sup> WEEK of YEAR

Ezechiel 34: 1-11

Ps 22: 1-6

Matt 20: 1-16

Today's Old Testament reading is a famous text. The prophet verbally attacks and condemns the leaders of Israel for being bad rulers and bad towards their people. He uses the image of a shepherd's care for his flock as the role-model for good governance, and lists ways in which the leaders have pursued their own benefit and thus failed and hurt their people. Today we use other and different images and role-models for leadership and governance, both in the Christian community and in society at large (though "pastor" is still a church word). As Christians we should be aware of how our leaders, both secular and religious, treat their people and use their authority and power. We should be prophets speaking against injustice, abuses, evil in every form, while of course recognising our own involvement in the sinfulness of the world. Aware of what is wrong, and feeling in ourselves the effects of this, let us do more than just criticise and complain: let us pray for our shepherds, the secular ones perhaps in particular..... pray for the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for them to act justly and with mercy and fairness, to banish the strong temptations to violence, greed, domineering. Let us pray in hope and longing for the day when the Lord Himself will come to lead His people. And let us pray and be concerned for our religious "pastors", who are human and fallible as we are, and sometimes make mistakes too: let us pray that the hungry sheep of the world may truly be fed when they look up to the shepherds. "The Lord is my shepherd".

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Text word-count: 276