

**Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B
(July 22, 2012)**

How He Loves Us

How he loves us! How he loves us! Now we can all respond to that, can't we? Most of us have some idea of what it means to be loved by someone else. Children first experience love from their moms and dads. You know, don't you, you youngsters out there, that mom and dad love you. You moms and dads, you married because you loved each other. Each of you felt the other's love and you said, "I want to feel that all my life" and so you got married.

Well, all of this is simply by way of talking about God's love and Jesus' love for all of us. It's so very, very important to know the great love of our God and of the Son he sent into our world to help us understand that love. Knowing and understanding that love and then sharing it with others can guarantee a happy and joyful life.

Believe it or not, all three of our readings talk about that love, each in a different way. The prophet Jeremiah warns the leaders of the people, the shepherds, he calls them, to be sure they are taking proper care of the people. That is their greatest responsibility. In their care and concern they are to show the love of God. And if they don't, Jeremiah warns, the consequences for them could be very serious.

In the Letter to the Ephesians we hear that it was God's great love and the love of his Son that made it possible for all of us to live together peaceably as the one Body of Christ, each one of us accepting his or her responsibilities to look out not just our for own welfare but for that of our neighbor as well.

And in the Gospel Mark tells us how Jesus looked on the crowds of people who had followed him and how he loved them. His heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things.

Sister Miriam Pollard, a Trappist nun, has written a beautiful reflection on just that one short sentence: his heart was moved with pity for them:

“I am the shepherd of the sheep, says the Lord. I search. To search is who I am. I am the one who wanders, the great walking one, the one who sleeps in the cold and culls the burrs out of their wool, Yes, I know – they cannot be recommended for intelligence. This is a small brain we are talking about. But I am their shepherd.

“They are the objects of my love. I take them up in my arms, my tired arms, my bleeding arms. And they are more to me than rest and beauty and food and light – my own, my flock, my creation.

“And I love them. I bring them into cool valleys where the trees drop fragrant shade, and the birds serenade them, and they can hear the streams falling quietly from the hills. Where they can drink. They shall eat and drink and never want. They shall romp in the green grass and race in the wildflowers.

“My own flock with deep brown eyes that speak to mine, and white wool that sparkles in the dusk. I have made them and sought them and brought them home.”

Theologians have written volumes that speak to our heads about God’s love. Sister Miriam’s simple, poetic imagery speaks to our hearts. And it’s our hearts that need to be moved, to be inspired by reflecting on this great unimaginable love of God that brings us all together and builds a world of real compassion understanding, forgiveness, and love. And you know what? We can all help that to happen. Please God we will.