

Follow the Leader

This is not simply the name of a childhood game.

It is actually an essential directive for living. We learn so many things in life because we followed someone. That is how we learned to read, to play a musical instrument, to speak another language, or to understand social behavior.

Many nations at the time of Jeremiah represented their kings as shepherds, leading the people to verdant pastures and restful waters. We see this in the art they left behind. However, many of the kings of Jeremiah's day were not good leaders—not attentive shepherds, nor faithful to God, who had entrusted the people to their care. Consequently, God stepped in to be their shepherd. This is the image of the divine shepherd found in the responsorial psalm. Jesus also characterized religious leaders as shepherds. He was distraught that the people were “like sheep without a shepherd” (Mark 6:34).

Is this situation different today? Many are eager to follow a leader, but which one? Ours is a multicultural, pluralistic, international society with innumerable viewpoints. Voices cry out from many corners, demanding to be heard. But which voice should we heed? Which worldly leaders should we follow? It's apparent that our leaders, both civic and religious, disagree on certain matters. What are we to do? The issue is not “with whom do I agree?” but rather “whose point of view makes me a better person? More compassionate? More understanding? More selfless? More *Christlike*?” Are we following the right leader?

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FOR *Reflection*

- ★ *Our Shepherd never pits us against each other but brings us together. Is this reflected in the way we live in society?*
- ★ *Our Shepherd cares for all, not just those whom society has privileged. Do we?*

I will raise up shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear or be terrified; none shall be missing.

JEREMIAH 23:4

ART_JA / SHUTTERSTOCK



