

Reflection on the readings of the 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Sept. 20, 2020  
Ezekiel 24: 15-27 and From a sermon on pastors by St. Augustine, bishop

Ezekiel as a prophet to the people of Israel suffers what he foretells to the people. He is a living example to them. His wife died. She may have been "the delight of his eyes and the desire of his soul" as the Word of the Lord said regarding the peoples' regard for the sanctuary. The Lord said the sanctuary would be desecrated and "Ezekiel shall be a sign for you." The sinning people "shall rot away because of their sins." The leaders of the people failed to be good shepherds of the sheep. The previous verses in Ezek. 24 are chastising the people for failing to repent of their filthy sins. The Lord would have cleansed them if they repented, but will now judge them. Ezekiel is innocent, yet he suffers for the people. Jesus is innocent, but he took our sins upon Himself. We can offer our sufferings for ourselves and others. As Christians, in this life we will have times of suffering, but also times of joy and consolation. When we are suffering we know times of consolation will follow. Also, when we are in times of joy and consolation, we know times of suffering will come. It shouldn't surprise us. It is part of life. God doesn't waste suffering; there is always accompanying grace if we will embrace it.

In St. Augustine's sermon he chastises the wicked and false shepherds who feed on their sheep rather than strengthening the weak. He calls on pastors to open the scriptures to the people who are paralyzed by sin and reveal what they can't see hidden in God's word. In that way they lower the sinners "through the roof" to the feet of the Lord. St. Augustine quotes the scripture that God is faithful. We will not be tempted beyond our strength, but will be provided a way of escape so we can endure it.

Both readings speak of negligent and sometimes wicked shepherds/pastors and call all of them as well as the people to repentance.

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