

THE SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST THE KING
November 22, 2020

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Opening prayer: *Jesus, our good Shepherd and King, rescue us from the power of sin and heal our wounds. Instruct us in your ways and guide us as we journey in faith and love. Let your coming at the end of time be an occasion of rejoicing for each of us as we strive to live out your Great Commandment of Love. Amen.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator reads focus statement: On December 1, 1925, Pope Pius XI issued an encyclical *Quas Primas* (Latin for “*in the first*”) establishing the Solemnity of Christ the King—which we celebrate this coming weekend—on the last Sunday of each Liturgical Year. In the 1920's, Mussolini and fascism were on the rise, the decadence of the Roaring Twenties was off and running. In response to the rise of fascism and the decadence in the culture, Pope Pius XI wanted people to look to Christ as the King of the Universe. The Pope wanted people to see Christ the King as the answer to all the chaos currently going on in the world.

Today's first reading images God as a Good Shepherd caring for his sheep. The Gospel images Jesus as Judge of the nations and individuals. In the second reading, Paul tells us Christ will reign as universal King, having overcome all hostile forces, including death.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Thus says the Lord GOD:
I myself will look after and tend my sheep.
As a shepherd tends his flock
when he finds himself among his
scattered sheep,
so will I tend my sheep.

I will rescue them from every place
where they were scattered
when it was cloudy and dark.
I myself will pasture my sheep;
I myself will give them rest, says the
Lord GOD.
The lost I will seek out,
the strayed I will bring back,
the injured I will bind up,
the sick I will heal,

but the sleek and the strong I will
destroy,
shepherding them rightly.

As for you, my sheep, says the Lord
GOD,
I will judge between one sheep and
another,
between rams and goats.

COMMENTARY

The historical context for the Book of
Ezekiel is the Babylonian exile. After the
fall of Jerusalem, those still alive are taken
into exile in Babylon.

*“By the rivers of Babylon
we sat mourning and weeping.”*
(Ps 137:1)

During their time in exile, the people have
no shepherds, no leaders. Ezekiel, a
prophet also in exile, tells his people that
God is going to step into the vacuum of
leadership and become their Good
Shepherd who will:

- seek out the lost sheep
- tend to his flock
- lead his flock to rich pastures
- bind up the wounds of the injured and
sick
- and be a judge of bad shepherds.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 23

Responsorial Psalm
PS 23:1-2, 2-3, 5-6

R. (1) **The Lord is my shepherd; there
is nothing I shall want.**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not
want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is
nothing I shall want.**

Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is
nothing I shall want.**

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is
nothing I shall want.**

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house of the
LORD

for years to come.

R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is
nothing I shall want.**

COMMENTARY

This psalm uses the imagery of the Good
Shepherd to describe God's care for his
people.

SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Brothers and sisters:

Christ has been raised from the dead,
the firstfruits of those who have fallen
asleep.

For since death came through man,
the resurrection of the dead came also
through man.

For just as in Adam all die,
so too in Christ shall all be brought to life,
but each one in proper order:

Christ the firstfruits;

then, at his coming, those who belong to
Christ;

then comes the end,

when he hands over the kingdom to his
God and Father,

when he has destroyed every sovereignty and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who subjected everything to him, so that God may be all in all.

COMMENTARY

The context for this reading is an argument Paul is having with some Corinthians who do not believe in the resurrection of the body.

Paul asserts that Christ has been raised from the dead, and when he returns, all the faithful—living and dead—will be raised up. Then Christ will hand over the Kingdom to his Father. After that, all earthly powers and the forces of evil, including death, will be destroyed.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matt. 25:31-46

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus said to his disciples:
"When the Son of Man comes in his glory,
and all the angels with him,
he will sit upon his glorious throne,
and all the nations will be assembled before him.
And he will separate them one from another,
as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
Then the king will say to those on his right,
'Come, you who are blessed by my Father.
Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.
For I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
a stranger and you welcomed me,
naked and you clothed me,
ill and you cared for me,
in prison and you visited me.'
Then the righteous will answer him and say,
'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you,
or thirsty and give you drink?
When did we see you a stranger and welcome you,
or naked and clothe you?
When did we see you ill or in prison,
and visit you?'
And the king will say to them in reply,
'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine,
you did for me.'
Then he will say to those on his left,
'Depart from me, you accursed,

into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
For I was hungry and you gave me no food,
I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
a stranger and you gave me no welcome,
naked and you gave me no clothing,
ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.’
Then they will answer and say,
‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty
or a stranger or naked or ill or in prison,
and not minister to your needs?’
He will answer them, ‘Amen, I say to you,
what you did not do for one of these
least ones,
you did not do for me.’
And these will go off to eternal punishment,
but the righteous to eternal life.”

COMMENTARY

Commenting on this Gospel, Patricia Sanchez writes:

Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), the great Russian author, is also a Christian who took seriously the demands of the Great Sermon (Matthew 5-7) and attempted to live his life accordingly. One day, a beggar stopped him while he was out walking and asked him for alms. Tolstoy searched his pockets for a coin but, finding none, he said with regret, “Please don’t be angry with me, my brother, but I have nothing with me; if I did, I would gladly give it to you.” At that, the beggar’s face brightened with joy. “You have given me more than I

asked for,” he said, “you have called me brother!” Tolstoy had not only grasped the intent of the Great Sermon but he had also penetrated the truth of today’s Gospel. He regarded the poor man asking him for alms as a brother because he had understood and made his own the great commandment (Matthew 22:37). But he had also learned to see the face of Christ in the poor and, because of that insight, he met the criteria of judgment set forth for our consideration in this Matthean text.

So many of the important themes of Matthew’s Gospel come to a climactic crescendo in this eschatological (end times) scene. Up to this point, readers of Matthew have been told that wheat and weeds will grow together until harvest, that all species of fish will be hauled together in one net, that good and bad will grow together until the final separation. Believers have also been instructed, through many parables, with lessons of watchfulness and waiting. With this passage, it becomes evident that the time of growing together and waiting has passed, yielding to the moment of separation and judgment. In this Gospel, Jesus is revealed as the King who will judge us on the criteria of compassion for the least of our brothers and sisters. The blessed are those who have ministered to the needs of the poor. In doing so, they have ministered to Christ himself.

(Used with permission *The Word We Celebrate: Commentary on the Sunday Lectionary Years A, B, C*, by Patricia Sanchez, -Sheed & Ward publisher (9-1-89).

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or drew you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. When and how is it hard for you to see the way you are treating others (especially those we find hard to love) is the way you are treating Christ?

3. Our non-Catholic brothers and sisters, especially the Evangelicals, say that if you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved. Matthew seems to offer another means of salvation: compassion for the least of our brothers and sisters. How do you believe we will be saved?

4. What can help us or hinder us from seeing Christ in the poor and homeless?

5. Name one thing today's Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: Take an inventory of what you have in your home and decide on three items that you can give to those in need.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God's Word and listened to others*

reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

Facilitator: Let us now pause to see how some-thing(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus, you are present in the face of each person we encounter. Help me to be more aware of that presence.*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Especially pray for the agencies that serve the needs of the poor.

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we thank you as we come to the end
of another Liturgical Year
and for the blessings and graces
received this past year.
As we continue our earthly journey
towards your heavenly home,
help us to keep our eyes on you,
our Good Shepherd,
and help us to be always ready
and willing to help those in need.
Amen.*

