

Christ the King - A
Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17;
I Corinthians 15:20-26, 28;
Matthew 25:31-46
Little Flower - 11/26/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, commonly called Christ the King. Pope Pius XI instituted this feast in 1925 in the face of rising nationalism, atheism, and fascism to reassert Christ's sovereignty over all forms of political governance. Today, however, the focus is on Christ as the messianic king who has obtained salvation for all through his life, death, and resurrection and whose coming marked the beginnings of the coming of God's kingdom. As we will hear in today's Preface, Jesus came to establish "an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace."

Most of us picture kings wearing beautiful robes and jeweled crowns, sitting on thrones surrounded by servants, and exercising power and judgment. If this is how we imagine Christ as king, this will profoundly affect our image of ourselves as Christians. In this imagery, our relationship with God and Christ will be distant and formal. Likewise, our Christian lives will be measured more by blind obedience to laws than by creative response to needs. Therefore, we will probably measure our personal goodness primarily by our practice of religion and by our observance of commandments.

However, if we apply today's reading from the Prophet Ezekiel to today's feast, we realize that Jesus was and is a shepherd king. As a shepherd king, Jesus teaches, heals and reconciles, and serves. During his life, Jesus taught by word and example. Offering his life to God for us, Jesus reconciled us with God and others, healing the wounds of sin and division in our lives. Throughout his life, Jesus was a servant leader, calling forth the best in others. Today Jesus continue his threefold ministry as shepherd king through the Church.

Today's reading from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians proclaims the leadership of Christ in salvation. Raised from the dead, Jesus is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus leads us through death, i.e., death to selfishness and sin, to our resurrection to new life in Him.

My brothers and sisters, at the end of time, Jesus will come in glory as judge and Lord of all. The parable in today's Gospel is very important because it is the only time Jesus presents the criteria by which we will be judged. We immediately notice two things: there is no mention of church attendance or the Ten Commandments among the criteria.

Although practicing our religion and keep the Ten Commandments are necessary, in today's Gospel Jesus powerfully teaches us that they are not enough. Jesus will judge us by how we have reached out to and helped those most in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. In the parable, both the good and the bad asked Jesus the same questions, "*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?*" What this means is that the good did not see Christ in others any more than the bad did. The difference was that the good reached out in compassion toward others simply for the sake of the others, not because they saw Christ in them. To them, Jesus will respond, "*Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.*" Jesus identifies himself with those most in need. When we serve our brothers and sisters in need, we bring Christ to them, but they also bring Christ to us.