Scripture Reading: Ezek 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.

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.
Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

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

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.

Scripture Reading: 1 Cor 15:20-26, 28
Brothers and sisters: Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits 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.

Gospel: Matt 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, whatever 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."
INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

This is the last Sunday of the Church year, which year, as you know, is different from the calendar one. Next week we will begin the new year, starting with Advent, our waiting for the birth of Jesus into the world. On this last Sunday of the year, the Church appropriately celebrates the feast of Christ the King. Here is the story of this king of ours. First, God continually sought out his people throughout history, inviting them to a covenant relationship. But the “shepherds of Israel” let God’s sheep scatter over the face of the earth. They actually made meals of the sheep instead of feeding them.” So God said the words of the First Reading. “I myself will look after and tend my sheep. The injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal.” God’s care for his people is exquisite, and it is the foundation of all our belief. He shepherds us today in the same way. The Responsorial Psalm, “The Lord is My Shepherd,” is used here simply as a reply to the First Reading. To paraphrase, “We see that God is shepherding us, as he promised. Goodness and kindness are given abundantly. God lets us walk beside restful waters, through green pastures.” We are filled with gratitude.

People of different generations sometimes remember and sometimes forget God's love. The ones who forget it fill their lives with other gods, whichever seemed most attractive. Idols, these are called. So, in the Second Reading, St. Paul tells us about Christ, who is God’s shepherding made flesh. Although death and sorrow and sin have been on the rampage, Christ brings the First Reading’s light and peace and wholeness. Then the Gospel tells us in a parable who will receive this light and peace. Not everyone can be counted among God’s beloved sheep. Some people have been goats instead. How do you know which you are? The standard is extremely clear. Have you cared for the hungry? Have you given water to the thirsty? What about welcoming the stranger, and giving clothes to those who have none and what about visiting people in prison? This is what God did in the First Reading. It is what Jesus did in his life on earth. It is the loving duty he has entrusted to us who are his body, his band of shepherds. If you have joined this group, then you are one of the sheep who have received Christ's love and who are very grateful. But maybe you or I have never taken time to care for Christ’s least brother or sister. Maybe we are goats. If we keep on that way, we should not be surprised when God says at the end of time, You never did pass on to others the care I gave to you. You did not let me into their lives. If you had, your gratitude for my love would have led you to them! I care to shepherd you even now, but all I can do is affirm the choice you have made with your life. You never did pass on to others the care I gave to you. You did not let me into their lives. If you had, your gratitude for my love would have led you to them! I care to shepherd you even now, but all I can do is affirm the choice you have made with your life. You have chosen to live without me, your God, and I must respect your choice. This is how a real King acts. He respects and honors his subjects’ needs and desires. We have to ask ourselves in freedom which side we are on right now. Before it is too late.

According to this reading, what kind of shepherd is the Lord God? If this reading has a message for people in Church leadership positions, what is it? What can you do to “bind up the injured and heal the sick”?

What are some of the many forms of violence in the world today? How can you help Christ challenge them?

We have a king who heals and binds up wounds. What does he ask us to do? “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink.” Christ uses our generosity as a criterion for salvation. How is it also a standard for happiness? What happens to you when you give?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Almighty ever-living God, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of the universe, grant, we pray, that the whole creation, set free from slavery, may render your majesty service and ceaselessly proclaim your praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.