

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Cycle A – November 22, 2020



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: **The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

All: **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Leader: **The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

All: **Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come!**

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

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.

In the times when the Israelite people were grieved by the calamity that had befallen their nation (They had been invaded by a foreign power, their holy city and the temple had been destroyed, the ruling and priestly class had been forced to leave the country, and now they were being deported to a heathen land, in Babylon), a prophet, Ezekiel, wants to encourage his people with a message of hope and comfort.

In chapter 34 we've read a critique of the leaders who allowed that debacle, because instead of caring for the people and serving them according to God's will, they first sought personal gain. But in that same chapter we find texts like the one that is proclaimed this Sunday, in which the prophet announces the fidelity of God, a love that does not undergo changes and that will manifest itself sooner or later. To better express his idea he resorts to the figurative language of the shepherd and the flock. The Lord will not forget his sheep and will gather them again, heal those that are wounded, and seek those that are lost.

(1) What words or expressions have caught your attention?

(2) What means do you think the Lord uses to watch over his flock?

(3) Do you feel that you could be a co-worker or instrument of the Lord for those of whom He says "I will seek the lost sheep and bring back the lost one"?

(4) We are considering the readings for the feast of Christ the King. What kind of king does this reading reflect?

SECOND READING [1 Corinthians 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.

In chapter 15 of his first letter to the Christians of Corinth, the apostle Paul tells us about the resurrection. This short passage, which is also proclaimed on the day of the Assumption, aims to reaffirm our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that our hope in the promised resurrection will be strengthened.

Paul proposes an image of death as if it were an enemy that must be annihilated. In this way it becomes easier for us to understand the idea that "death has been conquered." For the Christian, faith helps him understand that death is not our final destination. The argument serves Paul to show that the kingship and power of Christ are a consequence of his exaltation. This exaltation was produced by having been a faithful servant of the Father's will. Having been exalted, Jesus Christ assumes dominion over creation and definitively establishes the Kingdom of God, source of life forever, because death no longer has any power.

- (1) The text speaks of the destruction of death as the last of the enemies. What do you think are the enemies to defeat before death?
- (2) After listening to the answers to the previous question, how do you think we should collaborate with the Lord in the annihilation of those enemies?
- (3) If you had a friend or family member who is in his terminal phase, would you hide this news from him? Would you help him prepare for death? How could you convey the message of this reading?

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."

If ever a student were told the questions before a final exam, he would be a fool not to study them. But it would be even more foolish if they also told him the answers and he did not prepare for that exam. We could say that something similar happens with the text of this passage of the Gospel according to Matthew. This text tells us in very clear language, by the same judge who will pass judgment at the end of our life in this world, what he expects of us. We are not going to be asked if we went to Mass daily, or if we prayed the rosary frequently. Nor will we be asked if we practiced any particular devotion or if we belonged to this or that group within the Church. At the end of our earthly life, we will be judged on a single matter: Charity and Mercy. This does not mean that we should not do everything else. It is not bad to go to mass, pray the rosary, practice devotions, etc. to the extent that all these things bring us closer to God, to know him better, love him more and project that love towards others. If we practice all these things just to seek our personal salvation and neglect justice with those who have the least, we are wasting our time.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ does not consist in carrying a crucifix, or in proclaiming by word that we are Christians, but in bringing His love to those in need. And this is not done through good intentions and simple prayers. There can not be a divorce between our faith and love for others: Faith must be manifested in works.

(1) Read the beatitudes [Luke 6 (20-26)] and compare with this reading. Discuss in group.

(2) In what does the happiness that is spoken of in Luke's text consist?

(3) When you received the first Christian instructions, what did they teach you that it was necessary "to go to heaven"? Does it resemble what we are reflecting on with this gospel?

(4) Have you ever had any personal satisfaction, or an inexplicable joy that you gave to someone who needed something, but that cost you a lot? Share.

(5) From the list of actions mentioned in the gospel, which ones are easier for you to carry out? What are the most difficult? Are there any that you have never done or that will be very difficult for you to do?

(6) (For the faithful in the US only) Have you given your contribution to your parish's campaign to give food to families in need on the occasion of Thanksgiving?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees may propose their own petitions to God)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we met, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father and of the Son**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*