

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

*Reflections on the Solemnity of Christ's Kingship 2020*

The Bible Readings are Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-1; 1 Cor. 15:20-26, 28; Mt. 25:31-46; and song of praise, Psalm 23 in Liturgical Year A. Over the past few weeks, holy Mother Church in her wisdom, has used all the various images and teachings in holy Scripture, to prepare us for today. Throughout this season that we pray for the dead, our faithful departed, the Bible readings are centered on the end times, the rapture, the Parousia, the Kings and landlords of the vineyards, and the merchant who gave talents to his servants, and the king-elect who gave gold coins to his subjects and went off to be crowned king. We are today celebrating the greatest event that crowns our faith and our Christian religion, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe. Mostly known in many places as Feast of Christ the King, we celebrate the Lord Jesus today as King of Kings, Lord of lords, and Judge of the living and the dead. We recall the Christmas festivities at his birth which gives the whole world the hope of salvation. We recall his infancy narratives, his baptism, his teachings, his proclamation of the Kingdom, and his passion and death on Calvary. We also recall that on Easter Vigil night, as we decorate the Pascal Candle, we proclaim Christ the Risen Lord, as the Beginning and the End, and that all Power belongs to him, and all seasons, and all authorities. And so, we joyously sing the Easter Proclamation: the *Exultet*. With all these festivities, in pomp and pageantry, our new life of Easter began as the new people of God in the new creation.

Two of our Bible Readings today have the image of God as the Good Shepherd who tenderly cares for his sheep. Ezekiel 34 has that imagery and so does Psalm 23 popularly known as the Good Shepherd psalm. The portion given to us in this reading sets the ball rolling that God absolutely loves us and want to take good care of us. It is very consoling to see our God for who he is – a loving, caring, healing and providing God. The other side of this chapter not provided here challenges leaders and guardians of people to imitate God. How do you care for those under your authority? Another aspect that is worth mentioning here is the aspect of judgment. Ezekiel 34:17 presents God as a judge who would separate sheep from goats, and so does Matthew 25:32-33. Not only is God a good shepherd, but he is also the Judge. The solemnity of Christ's kingship is obvious from this stance as clearly brought out in these two readings. God will judge all peoples, both living and dead. We celebrate our King of kings and Lord of lords. Matthew clearly states that the Son of God would come in his glory, and would mount the throne, and assemble all nations before him, (cf. Mt. 25:31). Then comes the judgment. He will reward each person according to the deeds of our lives. The good we do to others will be reckoned as gain for us all on the judgment day. "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Mt. 25:34). Again, this aspect is where I am greatly proud of our Christian religion, and our Lord and King. No other founder of any religion has come close to this aspect, or of calling God his father, just as

none ever rose from the dead. Only Jesus of Nazareth has all the power and might and is called the Christ, meaning the Redeemer, the Messiah-King.

Finally, that Christ rose from the dead is not debatable as the Jewish authorities were inclined to deny. Later they got silenced by the spread of Christian teaching. Saint Paul calls him “the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Cor. 15:20). The resurrection is our sure hope of salvation in Christ Jesus. For this reason, we became believers in him who is the Lord of the living and the dead, (cf. verse 22). The issue of the resurrection of the dead is the aspect that Christ surpasses all contenders. It is the joy of Christian living. Here we come to realize the divine nature of Christ, who is in every person we can ever imagine. Again, the resurrection has proper order, according to Paul. “Christ the first fruits; then, at his coming, those who belong to Christ; then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, ...” (1 Cor. 15:23-24). Here we realize that Christ is in control, and that Christ reigns on the throne until he has vanquished all his enemies, those who vehemently do not believe in him. Then comes the final handover to God the Father, “so that God may be all in all, (1 Cor. 15:28). This is frightening to me and gives me joy and assurance also. Christ ascended to his throne, and will deliver us back to the Father, after winning the battle against the Devil, our deceiver. The Gospel of Mt. 25:31-46 is a narrative of how the Last Judgment would be carried out. “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, ..., he will sit upon his glorious throne, ...” (Mt. 25:31). And the judgment would be based on how we helped one another in their needs here on earth. The joy of our Christian Religion is that Christ reigns as King forever. How Excellent! That is the excellency of our Christian Religion. My brothers and sisters, no other religion can claim this supremacy. Let us rejoice and celebrate our King and Redeemer. Let us begin now to live as people awaiting to be called home to heaven, where the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit await our return into glory. Halleluia! Amen.