



Feast of Christ the King - A
November 22, 2020
Matthew 25:31-46

Background on the Feast and the Gospel:

The feast of Christ the King was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925; in the face of Fascism and Nazism he sought to offer an alternative view of what leadership meant. With the liturgical reforms of Vatican II, the feast was set on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, which is the Sunday before Advent. Thus, the liturgical year reaches its culmination with the feast of Christ the King. In the A cycle (which we hear this year) the focus is on Christ as the shepherd King. Christ has sovereignty over all creation and yet He is a gentle shepherd. His judgment on each of us will be based on whether we show the same loving, generous care for others as He has demonstrated for us.

In today's parable of the "Last Judgment," we are told that all nations will be assembled before the Lord and His angels. Whether we are sheep or goats depends on how we used our gifts for others. "All nations" could refer to Gentiles or it could also refer to Jews; commentators vary on this point. Also when it speaks about what you have done to "my brothers" and what you did to these "little ones," it is not clear whether the Gospel is referring to the members of the Christian community or anyone throughout the world who might be "underprivileged." It would appear that the more general identification is to be preferred – that is, Christ identifies Himself with everyone without reserve.

Note the six categories of judgment, a timeless summary of human suffering. It is important that we respond generously to those who have need for food or drink, clothing or housing, the sick or imprisoned. The categories described here parallel what we call the corporal works of mercy. Note that the judgment is cosmic and universal. The Lord is identified as a king or Son of Man (based on the book of Daniel). The important thing is whether we took action. We are not judged on whether we kept rules or laws!

Thoughts for prayer and reflection:

- 1) As you contemplate the mystery of Christ coming in glory consider how He would speak to you personally. For what would He give you praise and recognition and in what way might He be disappointed with you? Pray for the healing and forgiveness of those times you failed.

- 2) In this Gospel, we have a sense of the total identification of Christ with the poor and all in need. Christ the King identifies Him with the least of his “subjects.” Do you have the same sense of using your own authority or influence and identifying with vulnerable persons? How *might* you do that?

- 3) The Lord desires a relationship with us, a relationship that finds expression in all of our human relationships. Sometimes we are the giver, sometimes we are the receiver. In either case, we have the presence of Christ within us. How do you see the Kingdom of God being acted out on an interactive basis in all your different relationships and all the different aspects of your life? Pray for the grace to be more attentive to the kingdom or reign of Christ happening *through* you and all your relationships.