

Christ the King

November 22, 2020

The prayer of blessing the Easter Candle at the Easter Vigil says, "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega." As that sacred symbol of Christ's victory over sin and death is blest, we are reminded that for Christians, all things begin and end in Christ. Today's Feast of Christ the King brings the church's liturgical year to a close. Over the past twelve months, we have been taught by Christ in the Gospels for each Sunday Mass. We have been taught to love God and to love one another. We have been taught to use our time and our talents in service to our sisters and brothers' needs, especially the poor. Not only people who are poor in the economic sense but also people who are poor in education, poor in opportunities, poor in choices to improve their lives. We have been taught to imitate God's perspective and priorities in human life, and we have been taught to make what matters to God matter to us. Today's Feast is a good time to ask ourselves if we have learned these lessons a little better this year as we speculate if today we would find ourselves on Christ's right or left. To say Christ is our king is to recognize Him as the perfect teacher and model of the love of God, the love for God, and the love for God's people.

The scriptures for today's liturgy emphasize Christ as the Shepherd King. In the Gospel, acting as a shepherd, He separates humanity in the last judgment into two groups the righteous and the unrighteous. The saved and the lost. Christ acts as God does in the first reading from Ezekiel, where God says, "As a shepherd tends his flock...so will I tend my sheep. The lost I will seek out...the injured I will bind up, the sick I will heal...I will judge between one sheep and another." Throughout His ministry, Christ identified Himself as the good shepherd of God's people and urged us to care for each other by following His example of care.

Mother Theresa of Calcutta once said that as Catholics, we believe that we find Christ under the appearance of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist. In our daily lives, we find Christ under the appearance of our family brothers and sisters in need. St. Matthew's description of the judgment makes it clear that salvation is not only a matter of believing the right things. Salvation is loving all that God loves and doing the right thing for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, those who need clothing and shelter, those who are sick or trapped in one of life's many prisons.

So why does Christ identify Himself with the people who need what we now call the Corporal Works of Mercy? Probably because in each act of mercy, we experience a moment of being saved, here and now.

Fr. Roland Faley offers this thought for our meditation and prayer on today's Feast: "Redemption hinges on an open heart. Salvation is as close as the nearest soup kitchen, shelter for the homeless, city jail...or the broken person who needs my love now and not tomorrow." (Footprints on the Mountain p.743)

Fr. Valentine

Scripture Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/112220.cfm>