

Living the Word: Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24

Here, Ezekiel is prophesying against the so-called shepherds of Israel, their leaders. He says earlier in his book that they have been far too concerned with feeding themselves and not tending to their sheep – they have failed to heal the sick and seek the lost, and have instead ruled harshly – and this puts the sheep in danger. Our reading today therefore draws a link between scattered sheep and bad shepherding. By contrast, it also tells us that a good shepherd will work diligently to prevent the scattering of the sheep under his care, so that they don't become isolated, alone or vulnerable. This is why he goes out in search of lost sheep, to bring them back under his care and into his fold. Historically, Ezekiel's prophecy would come true when King Cyrus of Persia, a new shepherd, would rid the Israelites of their Babylonian captors, but we can also look at this passage typologically, that is, looking ahead to Christ, the Son of David, who in his life gathered the scattered tribes and lost souls of the world into his one flock, the Church, which is universal – for all, whoever they are, and wherever they come from.

Our Faith: Christ the King

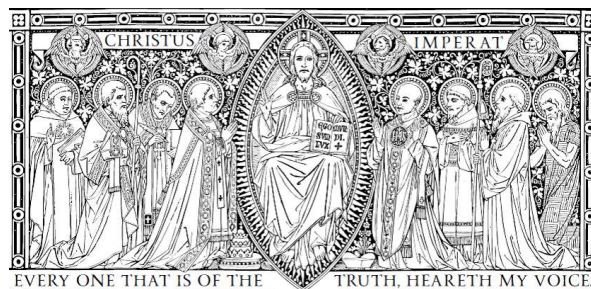
The annual cycle of the Church's Year reaches its conclusion with the Feast of Christ the King. The year that began at Advent with the hope of the coming Messiah, ends with the proclamation of his universal sovereignty: Christ is Lord of earth and heaven. Final judgement is one of Christ's proper kingly purposes; the Feast of Christ the King returns us to the Advent theme of judgement, with which the Church's year begins again. We are a pilgrim people, journeying with our Lord towards the glory of the Kingdom. This is the journey that we share above all in each and every Mass, when we enter again into the Son's self-offering to the Father; at every Eucharist we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are called to be people of hope, and to stir up his gifts within us.

May the infinite and glorious Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, so direct our life in good works, and after our journey through this world, grant us eternal rest with the saints. Amen.

26th November 2023

Christ the King

(Sunday next before Advent)



As we recall the Kingship of Jesus over all of creation, we are brought up short in today's Gospel. The King will judge, and he will consider those acts of mercy and charity which we have offered to others in our lifetime. There's nothing here about the judgement we often employ – trying to decide whether another person asking for help is worth our time, our effort, our charity. What matters is what is within our hearts – and the reason we perform such acts. Do we see Christ, our King, in the eyes of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned? If that is difficult to us, let us pray to God, that he will open our eyes to the need which is around us; the need for material assistance, love and companionship – the need for practical help and a helping hand. And know that when we do, we are ministering both to, and in the name of, Christ himself.

Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 25:31-46

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in thy well-beloved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.