Sunday, November 22, 2026 – Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe Year A

First Reading - Ezekiel 34:11-12. 15-17

A reading from the book of Proverbs

You, my flock, I judge between sheep and sheep.

The Lord says this: I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view. As a shepherd keeps all his flock in view when he stands up in the middle of his scattered sheep, so shall I keep my sheep in view. I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness. I myself will pasture my sheep, I myself will show them where to rest – it is the Lord who speaks. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall watch over the fat and healthy. I shall be a true shepherd to them.

As for you, my sheep, the Lord says this: I will judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and he-goats.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 22:1-3, 5-6, R. see v.1

(R.) The Lord is my shepherd;

there is nothing I shall want.

Second Reading - 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. 28

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

He will hand over the kingdom to God the Father, so that God may be all in all.

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their proper order: Christ as the first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him. After that will come the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must be king until he has put all his enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death. And when everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.

Gospel Acclamation

Mark 11:9-10
Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!
Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David!
Alleluia!

Gospel - Matthew 25:31-46

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

He will take his seat on his throne of glory, and he will separate men one from another.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." Next he will say to those on his left hand, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food; I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink; I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, naked and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me." Then it will be their turn to ask, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or naked, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me." And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.'

Inheriting the Kin-dom of Justice and Peace
Reflection on the Gospel-Solemnity of Christ the King Year A
(Matthew 25:31-46)
Veronica Lawson RSM

"It has long been a common custom to give to Christ the metaphorical title of King." These are the words of Pope Pius XI who established this feast between two world wars in the hope of counteracting the growing secularism "in public affairs and politics" and of finding a way towards global peace. Peace would never be achieved, wrote Pope Pius XI, until and unless individuals and nations accept the "rule of our Saviour".

In many ways, hope for the global reign of the Prince of Peace seems more remote than ever. The challenge of war and the plight of those denied humanitarian assistance have marked new low points in more than a century of violent and ongoing conflict which is claiming lives in ever-increasing numbers. The three-year pandemic underscored the vulnerability to violence of those rendered poor by the prevailing inequitable global economic system. The world needs the sort of leadership that Jesus of Nazareth advocated in first century Palestine, the kind of fearless leadership that Pope Leo offers to our world.

The gospel for today provides a blueprint for Christian living in general and for leadership in particular. Matthew presents Jesus as both shepherd and sheep: as judge and king on the one hand and as a suffering human ("the least") on the other. Works of mercy are the measure of justice or righteousness. Those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger and set the

prisoners free are “the righteous/the sheep” who will inherit God’s empire and have life. Those who fail in these respects are the unrighteous/the goats who fail to recognise the presence of the shepherd/king in the suffering of “the least”. Why sheep and goats? “Sheep” is a frequent biblical designation for the people of God’s fold. While goats grazed with the sheep, they were never imaged as God’s people, somewhat unfairly, I suggest.

This gospel story is replete with mixed metaphors. It is the gospel source of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy that have informed the Christian way of life for centuries. It focusses on suffering humanity. In 2016 Pope Francis named “care for our common home” as the eighth work of mercy. In doing so, he asked us to expand our horizons and to extend our compassion to the suffering of the whole Earth community, human and other-than-human.

The Feast of Christ the King brings the church year to a close. It invites us to consider ways of achieving the things that make for peace. If we wish God’s reign of peace to be realised on planet Earth, then we might heed the invitation of Pope Francis (in both Laudato Si’ and Laudate Deum) to engage in “grateful contemplation of God’s world” and in daily gestures that “break with the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness.” We might also take seriously Pope Leo’s urgent plea for peace and synodality, listening to one another and walking together in faith and hope.